the Freeman

Ideas on Liberty

JULY 1971

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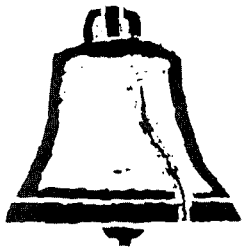

WINTER of DECISION 1775-1776

CLARENCE B. CARSON

A GOVERNMENT OF LAW rather than of men is hardly a recent idea. It was not even a new notion in the fateful winter of 1775-1776 that had been suddenly conceived by rebellious American colonists as a pretext for revolution. There were precedents and antecedents for this belief in government by law in the British tradition, in medieval thought and practice, and among Roman thinkers in classical antiquity.

But whether government should have its source in law or in men was no pretty abstract question to be pondered by contemplative philosophers for Americans during this winter. It was rooted in problems which were practical, pressing, and immediate. Government by men had resolved itself into the question of whether or not they should any longer be governed by a single man, King George III. It was a question that burned itself into the center of the customs, habits, loyalties, rights, and prerogatives of Americans.

How hard it was to decide what to do! Blood had already been spilled in anger: the battles of Lexington and Concord, and of Bunker Hill had already been fought. A continental army was encamped against a British army. The Second Continental Congress had been in session since May of 1775. It had already taken action which led almost irrevocably to rupture between England and America. George Washington had been appointed commander of the continental force. Congress had authorized an expedition against Quebec, approved of the construction of a navy, and sent a commission abroad to seek friends among other countries. Yet the

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"shot heard round the world" had apparently ceased reverberating. Congress affirmed its loyalty to the King of England, and George Washington and his officers toasted the health of the King during that winter.

The Right to Tax

Step by step, over a period of ten years, leaders of the colonists had edged toward separation from England. When Parliament passed the Stamp Act, they had taken the position that it was unlawful because Parliament did not have the authority to levy an internal tax. When Parliament retreated to advance along a different line with the Townshend Duties, colonists took the position that Parliament could not levy external duties for the purpose of raising revenue. A chastened Parliament repealed most of these duties but then attempted to give the East India Company a monopoly of the sale of tea in the American colonies. Faced by this action, colonists denied the rightfulness of the creation of a monopoly. By 1774-1775, such varied men as James Wilson, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams questioned that Parliament should have any legislative authority over America.

But from 1765 to 1775 it was always the powers of Parliament that were at issue. Protests were always made within the framework of preserving the connection with Britain and a professed loyalty to the King.

Why, we may well ask, did the colonists have so much trouble focusing their ire upon the King? It is likely that had a poll been taken among those who had given thought to the matter that an overwhelming number of Americans would have opted for government by law. And what better symbol of arbitrary government could have been found than that of monarchy? Hardly a century had passed since the Stuart kings had claimed that all authority stemmed from them by divine right. Were not most of the governors "royal" governors? Were not the customs agents who beset the colonists, agents of the "crown" in the final analysis? Were not the very soldiers encamped against Americans, soldiers of the king? Government by men could be traced finally to government by a man.

But the matter was not so simple. For it was not only that a few hateful laws were promulgated in the name of the king. Cherished rights and liberties could be traced to the same source. A title search for the ownership of property in colonial times would lead one backward to the source of that title — the monarch who had granted the

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land to some company or proprietor from whom a colonist had acquired it. It was no different with those liberties which the colonists loved. Many of the charters upon which the colonies had been founded specifically stated that those who settled in America should retain all their rights and liberties as if they had remained in England. The right of governing themselves traced back to the rights recognized by kings in times past.

If they should cast off their ties to the monarch, what then would be the status of their property and their liberties? Thus far they had based their opposition upon the unconstitutionality of the action taken by parliament, upon their position that their rights as Englishmen had been violated. If they cast off this last tie with England, how then would they defend their life, liberty, and property?

The answer was lying ready to hand, of course. It was to be found in the arguments of the Roman Stoics, familiar to American thinkers. It had been given fairly recent statement by John Locke in his justification of the Glorious Revolution in England. The French philosophes had embroidered upon it. Many Americans had embraced – philosophically – beliefs which would provide a new foundation for liberties. This new foundation was that this universe is ruled by natural law, that this is a law above and beyond the power of man to alter, and that it requires no human sanction for it to prevail. The most that man can do is to recognize it and live in accord with it.

Common Sense

In that winter of decision, then, all that was needed was for the breath of life to pass into these new foundations. It required only that abstract ideas be given the force of human will and be made relevant to the American situation. That man, more than any other, who performed this task for America was Thomas Paine. Paine had only lately come to America. He could be aptly described as a man with a nose for revolution – an itinerant revolutionist. He published a pamphlet called *Common Sense* in January, 1776. It sold by the tens of thousands, spreading like a wildfire through the colonies, confirming men in a new determination and galvanizing them to action. Paine went to the heart of the matter, minting deep philosophical beliefs into the coin of slogans and shibboleths.

He hacked into shreds the arguments against the final break. "But Britain is the parent coun-

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try, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young nor savages make war upon their families. . . ." More, "Ye that tell us of harmony and reconciliation, can ye restore to us the time that is past? Can ye give to prostitution its former innocence? Neither can ye reconcile Britain and America. The last cord now is broken, the people of England are presenting addresses against us."

As for the matter of a king, Paine went straight to the jugular vein. "But where, say some, is the king of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and does not make havoc of mankind like the royal brute of Britain." Let the world know, he declares, – and this is the crux of his argument – "that in America *the law is king*. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law ought to be king; and there ought to be no other."

We do not know after what readings, following which discussions, after what lonely contemplation, particular Americans made their decisions. We do know that when a resolution was introduced to Congress in 1776 for independence that the Congress approved. We know that a committee was appointed to draw up a declaration, and that the task of preparing a draft fell to Thomas Jefferson. And we know that Jefferson based his declaration upon the new foundations, and cast into unforgettable phrases the argument for government by law.

Read again the introductory paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence:

"When in the Course of Human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. . . ."

With the adoption of this declaration, the Continental Congress and with them – as it turned out – the American people, turned their back on the last relics of government by men and turned their faces toward the rule of government by law.

That was the decision which had issued from that winter of deliberation.

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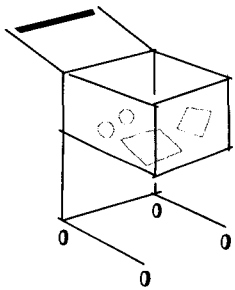

When rationing comes

LEONARD E. READ

PERHAPS the most effective way to begin a commentary on the rapidly deteriorating plight of the individual in our society is to trace present policies to their logical conclusion. For unless there be general awareness of the utter disaster that lies ahead, assuming no change in direction, we will continue merrily along to a complete loss of freedom. National doom, as some would say, but, more important I believe, self-destruction of the individual.

The course we are on must lead inevitably to rationing.

Such a prognosis does not frighten many people these days. Americans do not appear upset by the prospect, and even the people most strictly rationed – doubtless the Russians, where the rule is to obey or lose your life – no more resent rationing than they regret the lack of automobiles. Why? These are conditions of life into which they were born and to which they have grown accustomed. Rationing is no more deplored by Russians than are speed limits by Americans.

Why are Americans so little disturbed by the threat of rationing? Partly because we have had so little experience with this type of repressive law, but mostly because rationing laws have rarely been obeyed or enforced here. There was some rationing during World War I and much more during World War II; but obedience, such as existed, was cushioned by the patriotic fervor that attends some wars. I repeat, rationing has worked slight hardship because it was never *made* "to work" in the U.S.A. As with all nonsensical law – prohibition, for instance –

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rationing has resulted in mass "underground" movements. Black markets thrived. And otherwise first-rate citizens by the millions became lawbreakers, schemers, liars, and looked upon their departures from rectitude with approval and humor – as an outguessing game!

Painless, yes; costless, no! The long-run cost would be far less had we obeyed and suffered the pain of these politico-economic outrages. Had we obeyed, we would now despise and fear rationing and would do all in our power to avoid a recurrence of this ultimate in authoritarianism. We chose the painless but costly course: a lowering of the exemplary standards. Hardly any virtue – not even honesty – remained sacred. And this is disastrous: to abandon everything sacred is to forego the possibilities of a society in which individuals thrive best.

A Shocking Contrast

People who have no fear of rationing – the vast majority – can be said to lack a politico-economic turn of mind. Obviously, such persons cannot relate what they do not understand to that which has not happened. Only a sharp and shocking contrast could bring this horror acutely to their appreciation.

Let us imagine an instant transplant of a typical American family from Omaha to Omsk – take them from where they are and from what they are accustomed to and drop them suddenly into that authoritarian situation of which rationing is a logical and inevitable part. The first order of business would be to secure food. Mother would have no phone; but that would not matter, for there are no deliveries. She is without a car to go shopping; cars are rationed to commissars and their aides. No taxies! So she walks to a government store and lines up at the end of a queue. At long last, it's her turn. What are the choices? She can either accept or refuse the rationed items and in the quantities set by government. What a contrast from yesterday in the U.S.A.! Mother, in that case, would understand what rationing means. Shocking, to say the least.

No need to labor the point. Father would experience the same thing, as would the children. For anyone who can read the langauge of economic cause and effect, *rationing is failure on parade!*

Why are most goods and services rationed in Russia? Because the Russian economy is a failure; it is not productive. Why will goods and services be similarly rationed in the U.S.A. if we continue the present course? For precisely the same reason that the last barrel

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of water is rationed on a ship lost at sea: short supply – that is, not enough to go around. Socialism – the planned economy and welfare state – is woefully lacking in productivity; it results in scarcity. When we in the U.S.A. substitute socialism for free market practices to the extent the Russians have, our failure will match theirs; productivity will be no greater here than there. There won't be enough to go around.

It Can't Happen Here!

The attempted rebuttal runs thus: Americans will no more heed rationing regulations in the future than they have in the past. No government can ever do this to us – we think! Such optimistic forecasting is naive. When the real crunch comes, there will be no choice.

Americans could flout rationing in the past and get away with it because there was private ownership. Sugar or gasoline or whatever was always obtainable for some black market price. Such markets, however, presuppose something more than a barrel of water for a lot of thirsty people; they presuppose each having something of his own to trade!

When and if real scarcity obtains in our country, as in Russia, rationing will be *made* "to work." There will be no alternative except to abandon the entire socialistic rigmarole. Otherwise, any political hierarchy too tenderhearted to use the required violence to enforce rationing will be run out of office by those who are indifferent to human life. The worst, as Hayek says, will get to the top.[1] Given real scarcity, it has to be this way.

Why do people accept rationing? Those who envision its debilitating effect on individuals may wish to explore its antecedents in sequential order. For causes cannot be removed until they are known, which is to say that rationing is inevitable unless we know its derivation.

Rationing is the effect of a cause but that cause is the effect of a prior cause, and so on. What then is the cause that immediately precedes rationing? Scarcity, as already suggested!

Scarcity a Fact of Nature

Now, scarcity is one of the facts of nature, in the sense that life is always a struggle. Largely by trial and error, some men at some times and in some parts of the globe have hit upon specialization and trade, voluntary cooperation in market fashion, to make the best

[1] See "Why the Worst Get on Top," in *The Road to Serfdom* by F. A. Hayek (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 134-152.

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possible use of scarce resources. In other words, they have developed the principles and practices of private ownership and free trade, with government limited to keeping the peace – no man-concocted restraints against the release of creative energy: freedom!

But not all men subjected to the competition of the market are content with the results. And their efforts to by-pass the market, or do away with it, result inevitably in what I would call a contrived scarcity. This is what we witness in Russia and will experience here short of a turnabout. This kind of scarcity emerges from coercive interventions in the market: state ownership and control of the *means* as well as the *results* of production. Socialism!

Contrived scarcity, the cause of rationing, is itself an effect of still another cause. What is *its* immediate antecedent – that is, what are the components of coercive intervention? Wage, price, production, and exchange controls!

A few samples will suffice to make my point. Import embargoes and their variants, quotas and tariffs, make for scarcity. Impose embargoes on all exchange, domestic as well as foreign, and everyone, except the few who could survive by foraging, would perish. Contrived scarcity!

Minimum wage laws and arbitrary labor union wage rates make for unemployment and, thus, lower production. More contrived scarcity!

Paying farmers not to farm is an instance of production control – a political contribution to scarcity.

Medicare, where government, not the patients, pay the ever-increasing prices, is already making for a scarcity of hospital beds and, as socialized medicine progresses, there will be a scarcity of doctors.[2]

Holding Prices Down

These and countless other political interventions are a form of price control – contrived scarcity driving prices upward. Sooner or later, as this trend becomes intolerable, government will "come to the rescue" with the opposite and generally accepted concept of price controls – limiting prices, that is, holding them down. Rent control falls in this latter category. Merely observe – whether such controls are invoked in France, Sweden, or New York City – that a housing scarcity follows.[3]

This form of price control can

[2] See "Why I Left England" by Dr. Edward L. McNeil, THE FREEMAN, May, 1971.

[3] For an enlightening study of rent control and its effects in France, see *No Vacancies* by Bertrand de Jouvenel. Copy on request.

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no longer be taken lightly. Congress has given the President powers to invoke these counteracting controls at his discretion. Already, threats of such imposition have been directed at certain "key" industries. As prices continue to soar, we can expect the application of controls to all aspects of the economy. So long as present trends prevail, there is no political alternative.

Controls are invoked to cope with the constantly rising prices of which consumers complain. What, it may be asked, brings on these inordinate prices? Seeking the cause which is pushing all prices upward we come to the next antecedent, *inflation.*

The Nature of Inflation

Inflation is a *dilution* of the medium of exchange, an artificial expansion of the money supply. Inflation differs from counterfeiting in that it is legal and, also, it is an act of government rather than of individuals. But whether the money results from inflation or from counterfeiting, a dollar is a purchase order, and no one inquires into its source. A transaction involving counterfeit or inflation dollars is not an exchange of goods and services for goods and services but an exchange of paper money for goods and services. As the volume of paper money increases and as the quantity of goods and services decreases, everything else being equal, prices correspondingly rise. The equation is simple: Assume goods and services to be what they are now. Double the amount of money and prices will be twice as high.

However, inflation itself is the effect of a cause. What is *its* antecedent? The answer: excessive governmental expenditures!

Whenever governmental expenditures rise beyond the point where it is no longer politically expedient to defray them by direct tax levies, governments have only two choices: (1) go into nonrepayable debt or (2) inflate the money supply. The latter, a means of siphoning personal savings into the coffers of government, is the better political expedient because it is less understood and, thus, not so much opposed. Added to the billions collected by direct tax levies are these additional billions of expropriated private property. This is how overextended governments "balance" their budgets. Testimony to the general awareness that inflation depletes private savings is the attempt by millions of citizens "to hedge against inflation."

Overextended government is the weightiest of all the causes of scarcity for it lies at the very root

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of the formidable and dreaded rationing that looms ahead. Government doing the wrong things is the origin of all the aforementioned effects. Does out-of-bounds government, in turn, have a causal antecedent? If so, it cannot be stated with any more precision than a reference to the vagaries of human nature! Why is it that human beings behave as they do?

Vagaries of Human Nature

As this is written, I read of many distinguished men, reputedly free enterprisers to the core, who are pleading for Federal aid to bail out their ailing industry or community, or to compensate them for losses inflicted by droughts, or whatever. It seems that "private enterprisers" in trouble are, with few exceptions, as prone to turn to government as the socialists who revel in utopian dreams!

The tendency of those who say they favor private enterprise and related institutions is to blame socialists, communists, liberals, welfare staters, and the like for our deteriorating situation. Yet, when the chips are down and the going gets tough, the critics can hardly be distinguished from those they criticize. The former run to the Federal trough and turn the U.S.A. toward socialism as much as the latter. Such observations pronounce a harsh but humble verdict: we are well advised to look to ourselves as a major part of the problem. Why do we behave this way? Doubtless, there are more explanations than anyone knows, but here are a few suspected reasons.

- The tendency to satisfy desires along the lines of least resistance, regardless of where such a course leads; in other words, a breakdown or failure of moral discipline.
- An inability to reason from cause to consequence, from means to ends.
- A failure to understand that government is essentially organized force, the uses of which are limited at best; in brief, no discernment as to what is or is not the appropriate role of government.
- The naive assumption that government has funds of its own — a bottomless pot of gold — available for the asking.
- The notion that feathering one's own nest at the expense of others is not robbery if it is legalized or has political sanction.
- The wishful thinking that others have a moral obligation to cover our mistakes and satisfy our wants; that wishes are rights.
- A faith in socialism because the alternative is unknown, which is to say, an ignorance of the mira-

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cles that are wrought by men functioning freely in the market.

- And then there is the tug of tradition, the heritage of political authoritarianism which with rare and brief exceptions, has featured human existence since the dawn of social organization. It is the ageless urge for security sought from a king; it is the reluctance to take the risks of self-responsibility, the refusal to become one's own man.

Perhaps there is nothing better we can do about the current dilemma than for each to openly acknowledge: "The fault is mine." For who among us adequately understands and can competently explain the freedom way of life we would uphold. Not one!

I have tried here to pose the likelihood of rationing if we continue on the present course, and then to examine the cause of each effect – going backwards, so to speak, to where we now are. Admittedly, cause and effect are not always as precisely ordered as I have made them out to be; they are confusingly intertwined at times. But generally they follow in this sequence: (1) the vagaries of human nature ranging from "I want to be king" to "I want a king," (2) excessive government, (3) inflation, (4) controls, (5) scarcity, and (6) rationing with its stifling of individual growth and creativity, its smothering of the human spirit.

A recognition of where the present course leads should be enough to bring about a change in course, to do away with these numerous layers of intervention, to put government in its proper place, and to restore a reliance on the free market. Men free to produce and trade as they choose need not rely on rations for subsistence.

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Thoughts and Details on Scarcity

OF ALL THINGS, an indiscreet tampering with the trade of provisions is the most dangerous, and it is always worst in the time when men are most disposed to it: – that is, in the time of scarcity. Because there is nothing on which the passions of men are so violent, and their judgment so weak, and on which there exists such a multitude of ill-founded popular prejudices.

As presented by EDMUND BURKE in 1795 to the Right Hon. William Pitt

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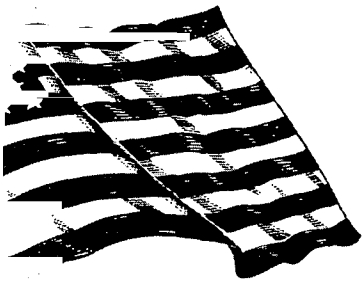

W. H. GRAHAM

I Pledge Myself to Help Strengthen America

I will honor God.

Acknowledging the imperfections of human society and the fallibility of man, I will rely on my personal concept of the Creator, remembering Him as the source and repository of all that which is good, true, and beautiful.

I will respect law and order.

I know that true freedom is possible only in an ordered society, and I will accept the necessity of complete obedience – in spirit as well as in letter – of the civil statutes which bind my American society together. I recognize that this in no way prevents me from peacefully working for the changes I feel should be made in improper or unjust laws, but I will at all times obey statutes while they are in effect.

I will instruct my children in the principles of moral order.

Drawing from the Judeo-Christian traditions, I will lay for my children a foundation of morality from which all right human action – private and public – must spring. I will not default on this parental responsibility and leave it to chance in the public schools or in the churches.

I will strive always to be financially independent.

I will look first to providing for myself and my family. Thereafter, I will recognize my responsibilities in charity to others. I will seek at all costs to avoid becoming partly or wholly dependent upon public welfare.

This article is reprinted by permission as a column from *The Lovington Daily Leader* (New Mexico) of which Mr. Graham is publisher.

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I will help protect my country's fiscal integrity
— by rendering full value for the things I sell, whether they be my labor, my goods, or my intellect. I will prevail upon my elected representatives to engage in no deficit spending. I will set aside in savings some of my earnings, and I will purchase only those things for which I have a real need, or am in a financial position to afford. I will ask my elected representatives to have first consideration for the benefit and welfare of the nation as a whole, and to place less emphasis on sectional demands. I will not request nor applaud pork barrel politics.

I will make economic opportunity my first rule of business
— and will place tax advantage at a secondary place in the scale of criteria for making business decisions. I will do this even under the penalty of tax disadvantage in order to help wean American business and industry away from dependence on the social engineers who have written the present American tax laws.

I will not give aid and comfort to my country's enemies.
I will not contribute to the financial support of those who would subvert our American culture with alien ideas. I will not purchase publications which predominantly feature writers who mock our institutions, our moral values, or our cultural heritage. I will refuse to attend theater and motion pictures which deprave American social norms, American ideals, and which legitimatize degeneracy.

I will respect my personal image.
Although costume and appearance is not the final determinant of what a person is, I believe that unkemptness is a mark of indifference toward the best in life. I will therefore strive for cleanness and neatness in my personal appearance. I will take particular pains that I accept nothing in my style and habits that will emulate or honor the extreme practices of those who have made slovenly appearance a badge of protest and dissent.

I will restrain my personal appetites
— keeping my bodily and psychological desires in rein. I recognize them as healthy drives, but only when I control them; not when they control me.

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I will reflect a good image.

By my speech and demeanor, I will strive to recapture the true image of the American citizen: a person of confidence, kindness, good manners, and a willing worker.

I will not desecrate the landscape.

In all my activities I will ever be mindful of my stewardship of the land. I will keep my private property in a neat and orderly appearance. I will respect the private property of others. I will not damage my interest in public property through acts of vandalism, carelessness, or neglect.

I will pay my taxes willingly.

In recognition that there is a price to be paid to maintain a safe America, I will pay every tax legally levied upon my produce and my property. I will work to reform those taxes I believe unjust, unnecessary, or inequitable.

I will be an informed citizen

— acquiring knowledge on matters of public interest. I recognize that education is a continuing process, and I will read about and discuss with others matters that are important to the preservation and ongoing of my country. I will maintain regular contact with my elected representatives.

I will maintain an active membership in my church

— and will not surrender it to the theological radicals, social militants, and other disruptive elements whose presence is only a passing phase in two thousand years of church history.

I will do my part to return charity to its rightful place

— by involving myself in some good work where I personally know the people and the problems involved. I will give willingly and joyfully that others might know the reality of human compassion and concern.

I will be a good steward of time

— refusing to waste it in idleness, unprofitable conversation, or foolish and vain activities.

I will say a good word for my country wherever I may have the opportunity.

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• MARKET CLOSED •

PAUL L. POIROT

THIS LITTLE PIGGY went to market. But the market was closed – indefinitely – by order of the government.

There had been a lot of complaints about the market:

- It takes a person at his word and holds him responsible for his actions.
- It allows unwanted resources to go unclaimed and unused.
- It permits scarce and valuable resources to be owned and controlled by the highest bidder.
- It allows foreigners to compete on equal terms with domestic suppliers and buyers.
- It lets prices for goods and services rise or fall in response to demand and supply.
- It permits people to hire or to work for one another on terms mutually agreeable.
- It lets buyers and sellers use anything they please as money.
- It lets the owner consume, save, offer for sale, or otherwise use, waste, pollute, or abuse his property as he chooses.
- It allows a person to succeed or fail in accordance with his decisions and actions.
- It allows a person to specialize in any business or profession, or to live a life of self-subsistence, as he chooses.
- It allows people to congregate in centers of trade and culture.

In short, the market respects the dignity of every human being and lets him do just as he pleases with what is properly his own, leaving him free to reap the benefits and suffer the consequences of his own actions.

A market economy can hardly be described as a natural development, such as might be found among plants, bees, birds, or animals in the wild. It is the result, rather, of human reason applied

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to the problems of the individual in society. The theory or premise behind the market is that the most practicable and desirable form of society is one that maximizes personal freedom of choice and minimizes violence among men. Insofar as possible, let man do as he pleases, acting alone or in strictly voluntary association with others. And this is the purpose of the market: to facilitate voluntary association and trade.

However, by definition and by nature, a voluntary association is unable to police itself, has no means of enforcing the rules of the association within its own membership and no means of protecting itself from nonmembers. The market, for instance, has no market method of coping with a buyer or a seller who resorts to coercion or fraud to effect a trade, no way to keep the market open and operating in the face of those who would close it by violent methods.

So, the human reason that calls for a market economy, in order to maximize the exercise of personal freedom of choice, also demands a framework of government, a government strictly limited in scope and function to policing the market, protecting the life and property of everyone who comes to trade in peace, and making sure that no person or group is permitted to block any peaceful trader from the market. This appears to be the minimum governmental force required to police the market and thus maximize the freedom of the individual, release his creative energies for peaceful production and trade, reduce his incentive and temptation to resort to violence to obtain or defend what he wants.

In other words, the optimum release of creative human energy requires a framework – or perhaps a leavening – of organized police power, a government of strictly limited scope and purpose to minimize violence among men. If this reasoning be correct, it suggests a corollary proposition: *Any expansion or extension of governmental force beyond the minimum required to police the market necessarily and inevitably drives individuals and groups to acts of violence against one another.* Such aggravated violence involves destruction of human and other resources that might otherwise have been turned to peaceful and constructive use.

The Ultimate Intervention

Such was the situation on the fateful day our hypothetical "little piggy" went to market and found it closed. Not satisfied with the risks and pressures of open competition, this and that person and

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group had sought and obtained government intervention in its own behalf:

- protection against foreign suppliers of goods and services.
- a special license or exclusive trading privilege.
- a right to strike and keep competitors from taking the job vacated.
- zoning ordinances to force neighbors to keep their distance.
- unlimited supplies of money and credit.
- fair trade laws to prevent price cutting.
- minimum wage laws.
- laws to hold prices up, or to hold prices down.
- rent control laws.
- low-cost public housing projects.
- guaranteed income in old age, or at any age.
- free schooling, medical care, dental care, legal aid, food stamps.
- a little privilege here, a little pressure there, and so forth and so on.

Yet, the more the government is asked to intervene on behalf of some persons and groups at the expense of others, the more difficult it is for anyone to compete in the open market to serve himself by peacefully serving others. No sooner is a special privilege granted by government to a particular person or group than other persons or groups begin fighting to obtain "their fair share." And whatever the grant of privilege or power, it is never enough; the beneficiaries demand more, and turn to violence to get it.

From Violence to Famine

The market cannot cope with violence, which destroys savings and investments, tools and facilities of production, the incentive to specialize and trade. This coercive detour of the market leads back toward conditions of famine and starvation chronically suffered by slaves, serfs, and socialists. People unfree or unwilling to compete in the market for possession and use of scarce resources inevitably find themselves trying to subsist on rations. Instead of faring each according to his ability and his effort, each hopes to share according to his need. The individual ceases to be responsible for what he produces or consumes; these choices are made for him by someone else. He stands to gain or lose nothing by producing more or less. Nor is it to his advantage to save, since his savings would be confiscated. The share rationed to him is in proportion to his lack of productivity. When violence closes the market, famine cannot be far behind.

One need not rely on theory or imagination to test the procedures

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and effects of closing the market. In the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, Karl Marx drew up the blueprint, spelled out various of the most important measures "to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state." The blueprint has been followed, the measures applied, in Russia, China, Cuba, and other lands. The markets have been closed, displaced by coercive collectivism. And the inevitable consequence in each case has been degrading poverty and famine.

In a sense, and in the light of the trend of developments in the United States in recent decades, Marx seems to have been remarkably prophetic in his list of ten steps toward compulsory collectivism. On the other hand, it should have required no great flash of insight by some genius, even as far back as 1848, to foresee what might be some of the consequences if a system of coercion were to displace the market system of open competition and voluntary exchange.

Experiences in Agriculture

In any event, whether or not Marx realized what he was doing, understood what he was saying, or knew where his ideas were leading in 1848, there would seem to be little excuse for confusion about the results of coercion in the latter part of the twentieth century. Indeed, one need not look beyond quite recent domestic experiments and experiences in agriculture for necessary proof of the failure of coercive practices and the reasons why nothing is to be gained by any person or group through further ventures in that direction.

What, for instance, have the cotton growers of the United States gained for their efforts over the past fifty years to get more for their product than the competitive market would allow? True, they have gotten some subsidy payments from taxpayers, but along with the subsidies have come stringent government regulations and controls and quotas and restraints of one kind and another. The values of quotas and allotments have been built into the price of the land to which they are tied, and that higher priced land carries ever higher taxes. Further, the withholding of American grown cotton from the market has opened the door inadvertently, not only to foreign growers of cotton but more especially to domestic producers of rayon, nylon, and a host of other synthetic fibers. Instead of competing in the open market, American cotton growers are finding themselves more or less bound and gagged on an artificial political pedestal, their own

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political power dwindling and no bright prospect of a large bloc of satisfied consumers from whom political support might be forthcoming.

Similar, if not identical, experiences could be reported for American growers of wheat, corn, tobacco, rice, peanuts, sugar cane and beets, various fruits, vegetables, nuts, and other specialty crops under marketing orders, agreements, or cartel grants of one kind and another. Nor does the attempted producer-monopoly seem to hold up with greater success when bolstered by international commodity agreements such as those for wheat, cotton, sugar, coffee, and so on. The mathematics of political power simply doesn't work out right to give a relatively small group of specialized producers a great and generous handout from a larger group of frustrated consumers.

A Cauliflower Cartel

Aside from the political impracticality, consider the simple economics of the producer-cartel or monopoly. For the sake of argument or illustration, let's suppose there are 1,000 growers of cauliflower in the United States. Why shouldn't they form an association for the more orderly marketing of high quality cauliflower? In other words, put their heads together and form a monopoly in order to hold supplies from the market and thus obtain higher prices!

Of these thousand growers, one of them is the largest and one the smallest commercial producer of cauliflower in the nation. And there's every likelihood that the larger one achieved his position through efficient production. Chances are that the relatively few of the very large growers are the low-cost, efficient ones, whereas several of the smaller producers may be operating at no profit, perhaps at a loss. (Size, of course, does not necessarily mark success; the point is that some growers are more efficient than others.) Of the thousand growers, no doubt the majority of smaller producers would be very happy to see the few larger ones cut back their output. But why should any large, efficient grower want to thus restrict trade or take himself out of the market? And if he did, what would stop 10,000 other farmers from trying to supply the cauliflower market he had just vacated? Of course, a law would be needed to prohibit cauliflower production by those who could show no previous records of production. And it also would be necessary to prohibit imports of cauliflower from abroad, if the domestic monopoly were to be effective.

So, there would be production

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and marketing quotas for each of the 1,000 privileged growers, not to mention endless quality controls and other governmental rules and regulations. An efficient cauliflower grower should want no part of any such "protective" arrangement. And if he only knew it, neither should the inefficient loser among the growers wish to be artificially shielded from or blinded to his failure. Far better to know the truth, so that he might turn his labor and other resources immediately to something more potentially profitable to him than cauliflower growing.

Finally, it is not to be supposed that a cauliflower monopoly begins and ends with cauliflower growers. This coercive action affects other persons and groups, some seeking a comparable special privilege for themselves, others seeking opportunities to return to the open market. If all the devious consequences of coercive intervention could be foreseen and understood, it seems unlikely that mature and responsible adults would ever want to try to price themselves out of the market.

Free Market: Who Needs It?

Many people will not be greatly concerned about the producers who may suffer as a consequence of closing the market. Their professed concern is rather for the poor. Who cares about a few producers, some of whom had accumulated sizable fortunes! Why keep the market open for that type of person? Why not try some form of profit-sharing or dividing the wealth or other socialistic program to give the millions of the poor a better chance?

The fact is that the successful businessman or entrepreneur probably would make out pretty well for himself under any system. Whatever "the rules of the game," he'd find his way toward the top. And, sad to say, the poor within a market economy would still be the poor, for the most part, under any other arrangement.

So, it is the poor who stand to lose the most, comparatively, as a consequence of closing the market. The competitive market economy is the only system that channels the creative efforts of the most aggressive and capable individuals into serving the needs and wants of the poor. That is really why we can't afford to let the market be closed.

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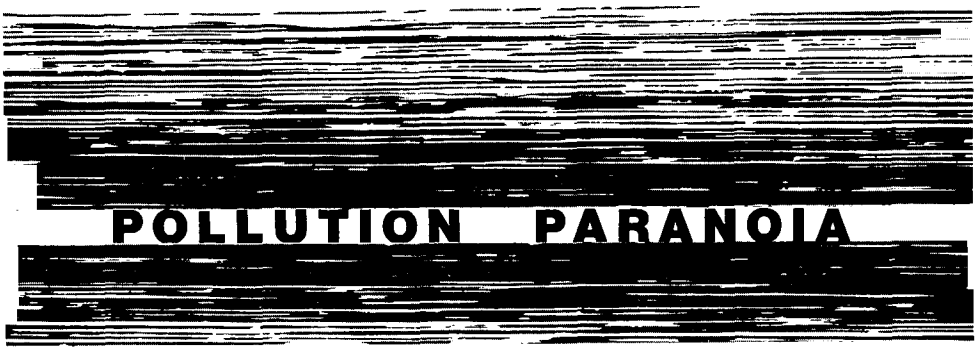

JOHN W. CAMPBELL

SOMEONE writing a letter to *Chemical & Engineering News* came up with a definition of three kinds of pollution – "actual, political, and hysterical." The gentleman is obviously correct.

The extent of the hysterical class of pollution has made the subject of immense emotive force leading to almost unlimited political pollution. The vote-getting publicity-achieving possibilities lead to the Instant Authority syndrome in hundreds of would-be-important nonentities.

And that is a major disaster; there *is* real pollution, and curing it becomes enormously harder because of the wolf-crying about unreal pollution. Energies are diverted from real problems to unreal and meaningless pseudo-problems.

The latest example of hysterical pollution was the recent hoorah set off by discovering mercury in canned tuna fish. A certain fact was demonstrated: canned tuna fish contained quantities of mercury up to and beyond the Federally allowable limits set by the Food & Drug Administration. (The FDA, of course, has been known to go off half-cocked before this.) This fact was immediately widely publicized, and thousands of dollars worth of canned tuna were declared toxic, forcing canners to recall their product, food merchant operations to go into high-speed reverse, and worrying people all over the country.

And, of course, increasing the political pollution about those awful, wicked, selfish, uncaring manufacturers who knowingly dump their poisonous wastes in our seas.

The problem of pollution is a

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problem which demands some very honest witnesses – and a recognition of that fundamental law of the Universe: *You cannot get something for nothing.*

There Is a Cost – and It May Be Disaster

In the effort to solve pollution problems, a second fundamental law of reality must be recognized; you can get what you want if you can pay the necessary cost – but you *will* pay that cost, like it or not, willynilly, if you try to take what you want. And the cost may bankrupt you – and the bankruptcy penalty imposed by the Universe is Disaster. A great and arrogant star, burning its hydrogen fuel profligately at 10,000 times Sol's rate, can shine bold and dominant for a while; bankruptcy in this case is called "a supernova explosion." It leaves a shriveled remnant ten or so miles in diameter called a neutron star, a shrunken corpse rapidly cooling into cold death.

You can't get something for nothing.

You can get what you want provided you can pay for it in the Universe's terms of time and energy; if you can't pay the fee, Disaster collects.

Therefore, it's essential that judgment be used; you've got to balance the cost and the gain, and forsake the hope you'll get it for nothing.

The elephant's immense size and strength means he need not fear lions, tigers, or other carnivores – but it also means he cannot cross a six-foot deep ditch, because of that size. He can't stand a six-foot drop, and if the ditch is wider than he can stride across – he's helpless.

A mouse, on the other hand, can stand an unlimited fall – a fall from 20,000 feet wouldn't damage him appreciably. His small size and weight mean that air resistance to his fall will allow him to land at a speed within the shock-absorption capability of his bones and muscles. Of course, he does have trouble with owls in the air, and cats when he lands.

You pay for what you get, in other words.

And if you don't use judgment, the payment is almost certain to be Disaster.

But the essence of judgment is to balance all the factors – *not just the ones you like.* You *must* get both sides of the question, or all sides, for many times there are far more than two factors.

Mercury in Tuna

The FDA and the political polluters joined in with the hysterical polluters on that mercury-in-tuna business without making even a

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half-hearted effort to get the full story before blasting off in all directions.

The thing looked decidedly fishy to me from the start – and I don't mean just tuna-fishy. Item: mercury has been used in medicines for centuries. Item: sodium cyanide is terrifically deadly, and this does *not* mean that sodium is poisonous. Item: methyl mercury, it has recently been discovered, is highly toxic, and is produced by living bacteria in contact with metallic mercury. Item: there is, and always has been, mercury in seawater – and it's known that mercuric chloride is highly toxic. With some 35,000,000 tons of mercury in the sea, and the sea full of chloride, the sea remains "the mother of life."

Just because mercury is in tuna does *not* automatically mean that it must be toxic; there's sodium in tuna, too, and as I say, sodium cyanide is terribly poisonous. I'll even go further; sodium cyanide is made up of sodium, carbon, and nitrogen, and they're *all* in your tuna-fish salad sandwich!

Perhaps the most familiar mercury medication is Mercurochrome – which has been used as a systemic antiseptic by direct injection into the bloodstream. Mercurous chloride – *ous* not *ic!* – has been taken by mouth as a remedy for many centuries. Lord knows how many doses of mercury metal have been swallowed by children who chewed on the familiar fever thermometers.

It just didn't seem that that report of 50 parts per million of mercury in tuna was all that devastating . . . .

So, after a few weeks of study and research, the boys finally got around to the conclusion that they'd really goofed high, wide, and handsome.

Tuna fish *naturally* contains from 10 to 100 parts of mercury per million – and always has. Studies of tuna canned forty-five years ago showed the same level of mercury. Study of a preserved, dehydrated tuna from a museum collection, known to be about seventy years old, showed the same level.

An organism that lives at the top end of a food chain, with all its food base swimming in a sea containing mercury, tends to accumulate some of the mercury. If it couldn't handle that much mercury, it wouldn't have evolved to sit on top of that food chain. The tuna is way, way up on the food chain; he gets into our cans because we're one step higher!

That tuna-fish scare is a Grade A #1 example of political and hysterical pollution taking off when there was no actual pollution.

For the planet Earth, mercury

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in the environment is normal-natural.

That does *not* deny that excessive local concentrations of mercury are being caused by certain industrial wastes.

However, let's be a little judicious, and stay alive longer. Men of good will pulled a major boner in screaming "Pollution!" when they found that tuna contained mercury; men of equally good will – and equally blank ignorance – pulled an exactly similar ignorant-boner by dumping metallic mercury in streams and lakes and saying, "No pollution."

They had no information that the mercury could be dangerous; metallic mercury is quite inert, not exceedingly toxic, and according to all then-known scientific data, would simply sink harmlessly into the mud.

The industrial polluters were no more guilty of their ignorance than the FDA was guilty of ignorance in their screams of "Pollution!" in the tuna. And . . . no less guilty.

They're Called Volcanoes

The greatest trouble with the pollution problem is recognizing the basic laws of nothing-for-nothing, and you-can-if-you-accept-a-cost.

Consider the matter of sulfur dioxide pollution.

Sulfur dioxide is poured into the Earth's atmosphere by the cubic *mile,* in stupendous quantities. It is being dumped into the atmosphere, and the thing we must remember and weigh is that it always has been – from chimneys thousands of feet high, and miles in diameter. They're called volcanoes. Belching out of these immense throats come vast quantities of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and the even more poisonous hydrogen sulfide. And I don't mean dribbles – I mean quantities on a planetary, not a mere industrial scale!

Every living organism is absolutely dependent on sulfur in its metabolism; most of your proteins depend on sulfur-bond cross-linkages to hold them in shape. Quite literally, a little sulfur's good for a man!

But *anything* in excess is poisonous – including oxygen, nitrogen, water, sugar, salt – anything. Sugar and salt are used for preserving foods, because in concentration they kill almost all living cells. And no organism can live without them.

Balance and judgment are required – and what we get in the current political and hysterical pollution is imbalance and insanity. Actual pollution is lost sight of, and practical balances that could be achieved are being made

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impossible by the hysterical demands of absolute elimination.

You want pure water to drink? O.K., friend – try the flavor of laboratory standard pure water, "conductivity water" so pure that it is an insulator.

You don't want *pure* water; you want a reasonable amount of flavoring substances added – some air, carbon dioxide, various salts and minerals – the kind of water your species evolved on!

Solar Pollution

Let's consider a Perfect Power Plant. Ideally, it would burn no fuel whatever, deliver power of the type we want directly, have no exhaust whatever, weigh nothing, and occupy no space.

You want to wait for it?

Well, how about a power plant that delivers immense quantities of power, causes no sulfur, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, or hydrocarbon pollution, and requires no attention but simply sends out its floods of power unceasingly, while we don't have to supply any fuel to keep it going?

That one's available right now. It's called the Sun, and isn't very portable, and does cause a great deal of radiation pollution – it keeps throwing out X rays, cosmic rays, high-energy particle radiation, and lethal photons of ultraviolet. The shielding we have is inadequate; the ultraviolet that leaks through is known to cause considerable cancer, and the particle radiation is also known to cause thousands of mutations and cancers, and to produce aging effects in human beings.

So we really ought to do something about that pollution, and order the Sun turned off?

Moreover, the Earth itself has been very badly constructed; many of the atoms it's built of – potassium, thorium, and uranium in the common granites, for instance, and in seawater – are poorly constructed and keep falling apart. They give off lethal radiation, and the heavier ones keep contaminating the air with an exceedingly toxic gas, radon, which, on being inhaled, causes radiation damage inside the body.

People living on the Colorado Plateau get a considerable dosage from the uranium and thorium deposits in the local rocks; they should force the Original Constructor of the place to replace the defective atoms with good ones, maybe?

Let's get really hysterical about this pollution business and throw all judgment out, and demand *absolute* perfection, and see what sort of system we wind up with, shall we?

Now we can't tolerate the mining and burning of coal, because

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coal contains radioactive material that's been safely buried away under thick rock. When it's mined and burned, it releases radioactive materials into our air, water, and ground. And because everybody knows radioactivity is terribly dangerous, we'll enact laws to stop that poisoning of our environment.

Then since oil and gas release hydrocarbons into the air and water, and those produce smog which is very toxic, we'll have to stop all use of those dangerous, polluting materials.

Of course we can't have nuclear power plants; everybody knows radioactivity causes cancer and mutations, and we can't have *that*.

And we'll just have to do something about the radiation pollution the Sun is causing, and cut off those carcinogenic ultraviolet rays.

So move the Earth into intergalactic space – and drop dead. You can't take the hazards of life.

One antiradiation hysteric fanatic – he has a degree in science, which means he knows facts, but evidently doesn't use much judgment – says the present AEC standards of permissible radiation from nuclear power plants would cause some tens of thousands of added mutation deaths per year in the United States.

I doubt his figures, to begin with; nobody knows enough to make any such guesses. Dr. Hermann Muller, the Nobel medalist in genetics, given for his studies of radiation-induced mutations, was deeply concerned about radioactive mutations because, while the total organism can tolerate some radiation, and make repairs, he was sure that when radiation damaged a gene, there would, necessarily, be a mutation – that genetic cells could tolerate *no* damage from radiation; that, therefore, the only permissible radiation dosage for genetic cells would have to be zero.

That was his position just after WW II, when the atomic problems were just being studied – and before the RNA-DNA chemistry of genes was discovered.

We now know that genes have built-in self-repair kits, and can very rapidly and neatly repair damage to the genes caused by radiation or other disruptive forces – within limits, of course!

What those limits are, we don't know – and the bird who comes out with figures on how many mutations and cancers a given amount of radiation will cause has no more solid data than Dr. Muller had. The "reasonable level of radiation" obviously must be greater than zero – there *is* self-repair. But nobody knows what it is, and we're a long way from finding out.

Moreover, remember the second

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basic law – you can get what you want if you can pay the cost.

We want electric power. The cost is not just so many dollars; it, like the automobile, will have a cost in terms of human lives. And *don't think you can escape it.* Even the Sun takes a toll in lives, with its radiations causing deaths, mutations, and cancers. (And deaths by exposure to its heat, too.)

Let's assume that the wild-guess figure of 30,000 deaths, mutations, et cetera, a year resulted from widespread use of nuclear power plants. (That's a wild assumption, completely unprovable, and almost certainly wrong – but assume it for discussion.)

Compare those 30,000 deaths and maimings per year with the life-cost per year of the automobile. And the way things are going, it's evident that we hold that the mobility that the automobile gives us would be cheap at twice the price; the death rate is rising, and yet no one says anything about banning the use of the deadly machines.

Of course, the automobile is the principal cause of death by smog, too. There's great to-do about anti-pollution devices to attach to the car – but nobody is proposing laws that end the problem once and completely by banning the automobile.

With respect to the automobile, in other words, there is none of the hysterical absolutistic, all-one-sided solution of "Ban the car!"

But the hysterical and political pollution on the "Ban the power plant!" is going great guns.

Of course, we demand our full quota of electric power; we just want them to give it to us from a power plant that produces no pollution whatever, and we want it *now*.

Too bad.

Even God's design of power plant gives off radiation leakage.

May I suggest that we'll get a lot better results if we accept that the Universe gives nothing for nothing, and that there will be a cost for every worthwhile thing.

That there is no such thing as a Perfect Solution, and the use of good judgment and design are an Optimum Enginering Compromise.

As of right now, there is a lot of far-from-optimum design in use; it can be cleaned up and damned well has to be before we start paying the bankruptcy price the Universe charges those who don't acknowledge their bills. Disastrous Collapse.

But we can *not* solve the actual pollution problem with either political or hysterical pollution.

It calls for judgment – not paranoia on the subject.

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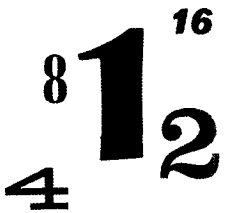

POVERTY and POPULATION

HENRY HAZLITT

SINCE THE END of the eighteenth century every meaningful study of the causes of poverty has at some point referred to the growth of the population. It was the achievement of Malthus to have pointed out the connection in so impressive a way that it could never again be ignored.

The thesis of his first *Essay on Population,* published in 1798, was that dreams of universal affluence were in vain, because there was an inevitable tendency of population to exceed the food supply. "Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio." There is a fixed limit to the supply of land and the size of the crop that can be grown per acre. Malthus spells out what he sees as the fateful consequences of this disproportion:

"In the United States of America, where the means of subsistence have been more ample . . . than in any of the modern states of Europe, the population has been found to double itself in twenty-five years. . . . We will take as our rule, and say, that population, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years, or increases in a geometrical ratio. . . . Taking the population of the world at any number, a thousand millions, for instance, the human species would increase in the ratio of – 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 156, 512, &c. and subsistence as – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, &c. In two centuries and a quarter the popu-

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lation would be to the means of subsistence as 512 to 10: in three centuries as 4096 to 13," etc.

This fearful arithmetic led Malthus to a despairing conclusion. He had started with two postulates: "First, that food is necessary to the existence of man. Secondly, that the passion between the sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state." And as he saw no voluntary way, except a "continence" which he did not believe was possible, to prevent the geometrical increase in population, he concluded that population will always tend to expand to the limit of subsistence and be held there by misery, war, pestilence, and famine. "That population does invariably increase where there are the means of subsistence, the history of every people that ever existed will abundantly prove."

Malthus Made a Concession

The appearance of this *Essay* brought down on the author's head a storm of criticism and vituperation. As a result, Malthus published five years later, in 1803, a second edition of the *Essay*. It was much longer, in effect an entirely new book, and it became the basis of the six subsequent editions.

There were two main changes. Malthus attempted to support his original thesis with a great mass of factual data on population growth and checks taken not only from history but from contemporary conditions in a score of other countries. But in addition to bringing in this supporting evidence, Malthus made a concession. "Throughout the whole of the present work," he wrote in the preface to his second edition, "I have so far differed in principle from the former, as to suppose the action of another check to population which does not come under the head either of vice or misery." This other check was "moral restraint" – that is, "the restraint from marriage which is not followed by irregular gratifications" – the deliberate restraint of the great majority of mankind, by the use of forethought, prudence, and reason, from giving birth as individual couples to an excessive number of children. In contemporary Europe, Malthus now found, moral restraint "was the most powerful of the checks on population."

The Principle Stands

Hostile critics have contended that in making this concession Malthus in effect abandoned his theory altogether. "The introduction of the prudential check ('moral restraint')," wrote Joseph A. Schumpeter, "makes all the difference. . . . All the theory gains thereby is orderly retreat with the

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artillery lost."[1] Even a more sympathetic critic like Gertrude Himmelfarb writes:

"Thus the principle of population ceased to be a fatal obstacle to man's dreams and ideals. Indeed the principle itself was no longer as inexorable as he had earlier suggested. It now appeared that population did not necessarily outrun food supply, or necessarily keep up with every increase in food. . . . Men were no longer at the mercy of forces outside their control: 'Each individual has, to a great degree, the power of avoiding the evil consequences to himself and society resulting from it [the principle of population] by the practice of a virtue dictated to him by the light of nature, and sanctioned by revealed religion.' Liberated from the eternal menace of overpopulation and the eternal evils of misery and vice, society could now look forward to the union of 'the two grand desiderata, a great actual population and a state of society in which abject poverty and dependence are comparatively but little known; two objects which are far from being incompatible.' "[2]

Yet in spite of these quotations from Malthus himself, the contrast between the first and subsequent editions of the *Essay* was not as great as these critics imply. The change in tone was greater than the change in substance. Malthus had been stunned by the savagery of the attacks on his despairing conclusions, and wanted to blunt this by emphasizing as much as he could any element of hope. In his first edition he had failed to admit the possibility of a really effective "moral restraint" on the part of the great majority of mankind; in his subsequent editions he did admit that possibility — but certainly not that probability. In fact, as he would have been appalled by the "vice" of our modern mechanical and chemical methods of birth control (now ironically called "neo-Malthusianism"), even if he had foreseen them, how could he have believed in the probability of the almost life-long refrainment from sexual relations necessary to prevent each couple, without "birth control" methods, from having no more than two or three children?

What Did He Say?

The trouble with most discussions of Malthus is that they have either tried to prove him wholly right on wholly wrong. Let us try to see, rather, exactly what he did contribute, and both what was right and what was wrong with it.

[1] *History of Economic Analysis*, (Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 580.

[2] Introduction to Modern Library edition (1960) of Thomas Robert Malthus, *On Population*, p. xxx.

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The great contribution of Malthus was to be the first to state clearly, and in relation to each other, two very important propositions. The first was the tendency of all populations, animal and human, to increase in the absence of checks at a geometrical ratio – or, in more modern technical terms, at an exponential rate. Malthus spoke of populations doubling every 25 years, in the United States of his day, or every 40 years, say, in the England of his day. He wrote of rates of growth as measured in generations. Today demographers usually discuss population growth in terms of an annual rate. But any percentage rate, if continued, is compounded. A population growing at a rate of "only" 2 per cent annually would double itself every 35 years; a population growing at a rate of 3 per cent annually would double itself in 24 years; and so on. Some hostile critics of Malthus have attempted to dismiss this proposition as "trivial" or "obvious." Its implications are anything but trivial, and it was obvious only after Malthus pointed it out.

Law of Diminishing Returns

Malthus's second great proposition, based on the limited supply and productivity of land, was in fact the first clear though crude statement in English of what afterwards came to be known as "the law of diminishing returns." No statement of this law is to be found in Adam Smith. (A remarkably good formulation of it was made by the French economist, Turgot, in 1767, but Malthus appears not to have been familiar with it.) By the time we get to John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* in 1848, however, we find a careful and qualified statement:

"Land differs from the other elements of production, labor and capital, in not being susceptible of indefinite increase. Its extent is limited, and the extent of the more productive kinds of it more limited still. It is also evident that the quantity of produce capable of being raised on any given piece of land is not indefinite. . . .

"It is commonly thought . . . that for the present limitation of production or population from this source is at an indefinite distance, and that ages must elapse before any practical necessity arises for taking the limiting principle into serious consideration.

"I apprehend this to be not only an error, but the most serious one to be found in the whole field of political economy. The question is more important and fundamental than any other; it involves the whole subject of the causes of poverty. . . .

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"After a certain, and not very advanced, stage in the progress of agriculture, it is the law of production from the land, that in *any given state of agricultural skill and knowledge* [italics supplied], by increasing the labor, the produce is not increased in an equal degree; or, to express the same thing in other words, every increase of produce is obtained by a more than proportional increase in the application of labor to the land.

"This general law of agricultural industry is the most important proposition in political economy. . . .

"The produce of land increases, *caeteris paribus*, in a diminishing ratio to the increase in the labor employed."[3]

Advancing Technology

Several points are to be noticed about this formulation. It discards the unrealistic 1-2-3 "arithmetical" rate of increase of subsistence postulated by Malthus for a more generalized and accurate statement. And it includes the indispensable qualification that I have italicized. The law of diminishing returns applies only to a given state of technical knowledge. Mill constantly emphasized this: "There is another agency in habitual antagonism to the law of diminishing return from land"; this is "no other than the progress of civilization," especially "the progress of agricultural knowledge, skill, and invention."

It is because Malthus overlooked this vital qualification that "Malthusianism" fell into disrepute about half a century after his book appeared and then remained so for a full century. For he was writing practically at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. During that Revolution (about 1760 to 1830) there was an unprecedented increase in the British population and at the same time an unprecedented increase in per capita production. Both of these increases were made possible by the relatively sudden introduction of new productive inventions and techniques. As Malthus's statement had utterly failed to allow for this, the law of diminishing returns was thought to have been proved untenable. Fears of excessive population growth were dismissed as groundless.

It should be pointed out here parenthetically that the law of diminishing returns as applied to land is now seen to be only a special case of a much wider principle governing both increasing and decreasing returns. Decreasing returns do not apply solely to agriculture and mining, as the mid-nineteenth century economists

[3] Mill's *Principles*, Book I, Chap. XII.

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thought, nor increasing returns specifically to manufacturing. In its modern form, the law of returns simply points out that there is an optimum ratio in which, in any given state of technique, two or more complementary factors of production can be employed for maximum output; and that when we deviate from this optimal combination by, say, increasing the quantity of one factor without increasing the quantity of the others, we may indeed get an increase in production, but it will be less than proportionate. The law can be most satisfactorily stated in algebraic form.[4] But the old law of diminishing returns from land, properly qualified, remains valid as a special case.

To resume: Malthus was right in postulating a tendency for population, if unchecked, to increase at a "geometrical" rate. He was right in postulating a law of diminishing returns from land. But he was wrong in refusing (in his first edition) to recognize the possibilities of voluntary population restraint. He failed to foresee the possibilities of contraception by mechanical and chemical means. He was wrong, again, when he formulated his law of diminishing returns, in failing to recognize the enormous potentialities of technical progress.

So developments in the United States and Europe, in the century and three-quarters since his book appeared, have made Malthus look in some respects like the worst prophet ever. Population in these "developed" countries has increased at an unparalleled rate, yet per capita economic welfare has also been advancing to levels once undreamed of. There are no signs that this rate of technical progress will diminish. Professor Dudley Kirk of the Food Research Institute at Stanford University, insisted in 1968, for example, that "far from facing starvation, the world has the best food outlook in a generation." He attributed this to a new "green revolution," based on new seed grains and wider fertilizer use.

A New Hysteria

In spite of the serious errors in Malthus, we have witnessed in the last decade an outburst of "neo-Malthusianism," a new widespread fear, sometimes verging on hysteria, about a world "population explosion." Paul Erlich, professor of biology at Stanford University, in a book entitled *The Popu-*

[4] See, e.g., Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (Henry Regnery, 1966 edition), pp. 127-31 and 341-50; Murray N. Rothbard, *Man, Economy, and State* (D. Van Nostrand, 1962), pp. 28-32, and Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 587, and *passim*.

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lation Bomb, warns us that we are all doomed if we do not control population growth. Professor Dennis Meadows of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology says:

"It used to take 1,500 years to double the world's population. Now it takes about 30 years. . . . Mankind is facing mass starvation, epidemics, uncontrollable pollution and wars if we don't discover new methods of population and industrial control and do it fast. If our society hasn't succeeded in ten years in coming to grips with these problems, I think it will be too late."[5]

Even the usual current estimates are almost as alarming. They run something like this: It was not until about 1830 that the world's population had reached a billion. By 1930 it had reached two billion. Now there are about three-and-a-half billion. President Nixon estimated in 1970 that, at present rates of growth, world population will be seven billion at the end of the century and thereafter an additional billion would be added every five years or less.

Most of these predictions are reached by simply extrapolating recent annual growth rates and assuming that they will continue, come what may. When we look at the projections country by country, however, we find that the real problem is created by what is happening, not in Europe and in the United States, but in the so-called "underdeveloped" countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Based not on simple progression but on calculations of changing birth and death rates and other factors, the United Nations, in its *Bulletin of Statistics,* estimated in April, 1971, that Mainland China's population, assumed to have been 740 million in 1969, would rise to 1,165 million in the year 2000. India is expected to leap from 537 million in 1969 to 1,084 million in 2000. By the year 2000 the U. N. statisticians estimate that the world population will reach 6,494 million – but 5,040 million will be in the less developed countries, and only 1,454 million in the more developed. In other words, the study foresees an average growth rate of only about 1 per cent a year in the more developed countries, but of about 2.2 per cent in the less developed countries – i.e., most of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

At the Edge of Subsistence

This outlook is at least a partial vindication of Malthus. His central thesis, supported in the later editions of his *Essay* by a wealth of research, was that every advance in the arts of increasing subsistence had been absorbed in

[5] *National Enquirer,* May 16, 1971.

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the past by a consequent increase of population, thus preventing any rise in the general level of living. He was right regarding the past; he is still right in his forecasts so far as most of the world is concerned. It is widely estimated that of the world's present three-and-a-half billion people, nearly two billion are underfed. And it seems to be precisely where they are already underfed that they tend to multiply fastest, to the edge of subsistence.

Though the problem of population growth is most urgent in the backward countries, it exists everywhere. Those who are most concerned about overpopulation in the advanced countries today see it less as an immediate menace to the food supply than as a menace to "the quality of life." They foresee overcrowding, still bigger cities, "urban sprawl," more automobiles, more roads, more traffic jams, more waste products, more garbage, more sewage, more smoke, more noxious fumes, more pollutants, contaminants, and poisons.

Though these fears may be exaggerated, they have a rational basis. We may take it as a reasonable assumption that in most parts of the world today, even in the advanced countries, population has already reached or passed its optimum level in purely economic terms. In other words, there are very few places left in which it is probable that additional hands would lead to a more than proportionate increase in returns. The opposite is nearly everywhere more likely. Therefore we may assume that any increase in population will reduce per capita production, not necessarily in absolute amount, but in comparison with what it could be without a further population growth. From this standpoint the problem of overpopulation is not merely one for some distant future, even in the advanced countries, but one that exists now.

The Macro Solution, by Government Coercion

What, then, is the solution? Most of the neo-Malthusians, unfortunately, are collectivist in their thinking; they want to solve the problem *in the aggregate*, and by government coercion. They not only want governments to flood their countries with propaganda for The Pill, The Loop, and other methods of contraception, encouraging even abortion; they want to sterilize men and women. They demand "Zero Population Growth Now." A professor of "human ecology" at the University of California declares that the community cannot "watch children starve." Therefore: "If the community has the responsibility of

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keeping children alive it must also have the power to decide when they may be procreated. Only so can we save ourselves from the degradation of runaway population growth."[6]

The professor surely has the courage of his premises.

It is the great merit of Malthus to have been not only the first to see the problem clearly but also the first to propose the proper path to its solution. He was a relentless critic of the poor-laws of his day:

"The poor laws of England tend to depress the general conditions of the poor. . . . Their first obvious tendency is to increase population without increasing the food for its support. A poor man may marry with little or no prospect of being able to support a family without parish assistance. They may be said, therefore, to create the poor which they maintain. . . .

"If it be taught that all who are born have a *right* to support on the land, whatever be their number, and that there is no occasion to exercise any prudence in the affair of marriage so as to check this number, the temptations, according to all the known principles of human nature, will inevitably be yielded to, and more and more will gradually become dependent on parish assistance."[7]

Malthus's strictures did influence the Poor Law Reform of 1834. But no government in the world today is willing to accept his unpalatable conclusions. Nearly all continue to subsidize and reward indigent mothers or families in direct proportion to the number of children they bring into the world, legitimately or illegitimately, and cannot support.

Malthus was an individualist and a libertarian. His own proposed remedy for overpopulation was both voluntary and simple:

"I see no harm in drawing the picture of a society in which each individual is supposed strictly to fulfill his duties. . . . The happiness of the whole is to be the result of the happiness of individuals, and to begin first with them. No co-operation is required. Every step tells. He who performs his duty faithfully will reap the full fruits of it, whatever be the number of others who fail. This duty is intelligible to the humblest capacity. It is merely that he is not to bring beings into the world for whom he cannot find the means of support."[8]

If each of us adhered to this principle, no overpopulation problem would exist.

[6] Garrett Hardin in *The New York Times*, May 6, 1971.

[7] *Essay on Population*, Book III, Chaps. VI and VII.

[8] *Ibid.*, Book IV, Chap. III.

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FREEDOM: Antidote to Political Power

HAVEN GOW

SERIOUS PROPONENTS of liberty long have warned that cultural, economic, and especially political power must be diffused, balanced, and limited. When too much power is concentrated in the hands of the government, we find a corresponding dissolution of personal freedom. What has happened in this country, especially in the past decade, has served to reinforce the suspicion of concentrated power.

Robert Nisbet in his important and valuable work, *The Quest for Community*, tells us that increasing atomization exists in our society because the government, unfettered by sufficient restraints upon its power, has implemented urban renewal programs which have tended to destroy cultural diversity and centers of community life. Dr. Edward Banfield of Harvard University in *The Unheavenly City* and Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* explain how governmental programs, intended to help the poor, have rather added to the woes of the unfortunate. There is a growing awareness among scholars that political interventions fail to accomplish their proclaimed economic ends. Peter Drucker, for example, tells us in *The Age of Discontinuity* that the only thing that the government has been able to do effectively is wage war and inflate the currency. What increasing numbers are saying is that the augmentation of governmental power inexorably leads to the diminution of personal freedom.

Implicit in this view of government's limited role is the rejection of the notion that all problems are reducible to the politico-economic sphere, and therefore demand politico-economic solutions. It holds, rather, to Irving Babbitt's view that the economic problem blends into the political, the polit-

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ical into the philosophical, and the philosophical into the religious. But during the past decade we have been innundated with talk about how legislation and socio-economic planning would help create "The Great Society." Enact the civil rights bills, we were led to believe, and there will be an end to race problems that have drained the moral resources of our nation for over a hundred years. Increase the GNP and provide material benefits to our citizens so that happiness and peace of mind will prevail in our society. Unfortunately, the passage of civil rights legislation, though successful in achieving some goals, has not made blacks and whites love one another nor has it secured domestic tranquillity. And, regrettably, all the material benefits that young people enjoy have not made them realize that drug-taking, thrill-seeking, and "free sex" are merely substitutes (tedious, at best) for the ultimately more rewarding pleasures that emanate from self-discipline, self-restraint, self-cultivation. Ever mindful of the demands of man's nature, the proponent of liberty recognizes that most of the problems facing man can be dealt with only through a resuscitation of the human spirit. To be sure, it is a sad mistake to assume that politico-economic remedies can resolve what really are disorders of the mind and spirit requiring philosophical and religious solutions. As Burke so trenchantly observed, you cannot resolve the agonizing problem of evil by merely decreeing that monarchies shall no longer exist.

Natural Inequality in Matters of Body, Mind, and Spirit

The proponent of liberty also has recognized that there exists among men a natural inequality in most matters of body, mind, and spirit. As a consequence, he has not been deluded by visionary schemes which have as their purpose the leveling of men. Motivated by the leveling impulse, ideologues within the past ten years have attempted through legislation and socio-economic planning to create a synthetic equality. But the natural distinctions among men persist, for the only genuine equality is metaphysical. John Adams recognized this when he said:

> That all men are born to equal rights is true. Every being has a right to his own, as clear, as moral, as any sacred being has. This is as indubitable as a moral government in the universe. But to teach that all men are born with equal influence in society, to equal property and advantages through life, is as gross a fraud, as glaring an imposition on the credulity of the people as ever

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was practiced by monks, by Druids, by Brahmins, by priests of the immortal Lama, or by the self-styled philosophers of the French revolution.[1]

In line with the recognition of the natural inequality among men is the realization that any society requires leaders who have developed the ethical and intellectual refinement needed to distinguish between truth and error, right and wrong, the permanent and the purely ephemeral. This is a function of education, as Dr. Russell Kirk sees it:

> The function of the college is not to gratify the immediate appetite, but rather to introduce the rising generation to long views. The function of the college is not to rouse young people to revolt against the nature of things, but rather to acquaint them with the wisdom of our ancestors. The function of the college is not to promulgate an impractical ideal of human perfectibility, but rather to teach us what Unumuno called the tragic view of life – the greatness and fallibility of man, as described in humane letters. The function of the college is not to inflame the passion, but rather to lead us toward right reason through philosophy.[2]

However, when educators at our great colleges and universities become intoxicated with the mania of ideology and relinquish their responsibilities as intellectual midwives and transmitters of the immense cultural heritage of the West, we see the tragic consequences: riots at Berkeley; the burning of important research papers; the illicit and forcible occupation of buildings; the shoutings of slogans and obscenities; Columbia University; Kent State; and the bombing at Harvard University and the University of Wisconsin.

A Delicate Balance

Central to the survival of any society is a delicate balance between freedom and order, tradition and change. It is essential that we observe the norms and traditions of civility. For when there is an inordinate emphasis on either freedom or order, when thinking in slogans and speaking with bullets replace rational discourse, when speakers are shouted down, and when the spirit of religion and the spirit of the gentleman are considered "behind the times," we see, as we have witnessed in this nation, the alarming disintegration of the civil social order.

Perhaps the events of recent years may bring a new appreciation of the vital necessity of personal freedom under limited government. Let us hope and pray that if and when this happens, the hour will not already be too late.

[1] *The Works of John Adams*, Volume VI, pp. 453-4.

[2] *National Review*, June 18, 1968.

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MORALS and LIBERTY

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F. A. HARPER

TO MANY PERSONS, the Welfare State has become a symbol of morality and righteousness. This makes those who favor the Welfare State appear to be the true architects of a better world; those who oppose it, immoral rascals who might be expected to rob banks or to do most anything in defiance of ethical conduct. But is this so? Is the banner of morality, when applied to the concept of the Welfare State, one that is true or false?

Now what is the test of morality or immorality to be applied to the Welfare State idea? I should like to pose five fundamental ethical concepts, as postulates, by which to test it. They are the ethical precepts found in the true Christian religion – true to its original foundations; and they are likewise found in other religious faiths, wherever and under whatever name these other religious concepts assist persons to perceive and practice the moral truths of human conduct.

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Moral Postulate No. 1

Economics and morals are both parts of one inseparable body of truth. They must, therefore, be in harmony with one another. What is right morally must also be right economically, and vice versa. Since morals are a guide to betterment and to self-protection, economic policies that violate Moral Truth, will, with certainty, cause degeneration and self-destruction.

This postulate may seem simple and self-evident. Yet many econo-

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mists and others of my acquaintance, including one who was a most capable and admired teacher, presume to draw some kind of an impassable line of distinction between morals and economics. Such persons fail to test their economic concepts against their moral precepts. Some even scorn the moral base for testing economic concepts, as though it would somehow pollute their economic purity.

An unusually capable minister recently said that only a short time before, for the first time, he had come to realize the close connection and inter-harmony that exist between morals and economics. He had always tried to reserve one compartment for his religious thought and another separate one for his economic thought. "Fortunately," he said, in essence, "my economic thinking happened to be in harmony with my religious beliefs; but it frightens me now to realize the risk I was taking in ignoring the harmony that must exist between the two."

This viewpoint – that there is no necessary connection between morals and economics – is all too prevalent. It explains, I believe, why immoral economic acts are tolerated, if not actively promoted, by persons of high repute who otherwise may be considered to be persons of high moral standards.

Moral Postulate No. 2

There is a force in the universe which no mortal can alter. Neither you nor I nor any earthly potentate with all his laws and edicts can alter this rule of the universe, no matter how great one's popularity in his position of power. Some call this force God. Others call it Natural Law. Still others call it the Supernatural. But no matter how one may wish to name it, there is a force which rules without surrender to any mortal man or group of men – a force that is oblivious to anyone who presumes to elevate himself and his wishes above its rule.

This concept is the basis for all relationships of cause and consequence – all science – whether it be something already discovered or something yet to be discovered. Its scope includes phenomena such as those of physics and chemistry; it also includes those of human conduct. The so-called Law of Gravity is one expression of Natural Law. Scientific discovery means the unveiling to human perception of something that has always existed. If it had not existed prior to the discovery – even though we were ignorant of it – it could not have been there to be discovered. That is the meaning of the concept of Natural Law.

This view – there exists a Natural Law which rules over the

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affairs of human conduct – will be challenged by some who point out that man possesses the capacity for choice; that man's activity reflects a quality lacking in the chemistry of a stone and in the physical principle of the lever. But this trait of man – this capacity for choice – does not release him from the rule of cause and effect, which he can neither veto nor alter. What the capacity for choice means, instead, is that he is thereby enabled, by his own choice, to act either wisely or unwisely – that is, in either accord or discord with the truths of Natural Law. But once he has made his choice, the inviolate rule of cause and consequence takes over with an iron hand of justice, and renders unto the doer either a prize or a penalty, as the consequence of his choice.

It is important, at this point, to note that morality presumes the existence of choice. One cannot be truly moral except as there exists the option of being immoral, and except as he selects the moral rather than the immoral option. In the admirable words of Thomas Davidson: "That which is not free is not responsible, and that which is not responsible is not moral." This means that free choice is a prerequisite of morality.

If I surrender my freedom of choice to a ruler – by vote or otherwise – I am still subject to the superior rule of Natural Law or Moral Law. Although I am subservient to the ruler who orders me to violate Truth, I must still pay the penalty for the evil or foolish acts in which I engage at his command.

Under this postulate–that there is a force in the universe which no mortal can alter – ignorance of Moral Law is no excuse to those who violate it, because Moral Law rules over the consequences of ignorance the same as over the consequences of wisdom. This is true whether the ignorance is accompanied by good intentions or not; whether it is carried out under the name of some religion or the Welfare State or whatnot.

What, then, is the content of a basic moral code? What are the rules which, if followed, will better the condition of men?

Moral Postulate No. 3

The Golden Rule and the Decalogue, and their near equivalents in other great religions, provide the basic moral codes for man's conduct. The Golden Rule and the Decalogue are basic moral guides having priority over all other considerations. It is these which have guided the conduct of man in all progressive civilizations. With their violation has come the downfall of individuals and civilizations.

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Some may prefer as a moral code something like: "Do as God would have us do," or "Do as Jesus would have done." But such as these, alone, are not adequate guides to conduct unless they are explained further, or unless they serve as symbolic of a deeper specific meaning. What *would* God have us do? What *would* Jesus have done? Only by adding some guides such as the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments can we know the answers to these questions.

The Golden Rule – the rule of refraining from imposing on others what I would not have them impose on me – means that moral conduct for one is moral conduct for another; that there is not one set of moral guides for Jones and another for Smith; that the concept of equality under Moral Law is a part of morality itself. This alone is held by many to be an adequate moral code. But in spite of its importance as part of the moral code of conduct in this respect, the Golden Rule is not, it seems to me, sufficient unto itself. It is no more sufficient than the mere admonition, "Do good," which leaves undefined what is good and what is evil. The murderer, who at the time of the crime felt justified in committing it, can quote the Golden Rule in self-defense: "If I had done what that so-and-so did, and had acted as he acted, I would consider it fair and proper for someone to murder me." And likewise the thief may argue that if he were like the one he has robbed, or if he were a bank harboring all those "ill-gotten gains," he would consider himself the proper object of robbery. Some claim that justification for the Welfare State, too, is to be found in the Golden Rule. So, in addition to the Golden Rule, further rules are needed as guides for moral conduct.

The Decalogue embodies the needed guides on which the Golden Rule can function. But within the Ten Commandments, the two with which we shall be especially concerned herein are: (1) Thou shalt not steal. (2) Thou shalt not covet.

The Decalogue serves as a guide to moral conduct which, if violated, brings upon the violator a commensurate penalty. There may be other guides to moral conduct which one might wish to add to the Golden Rule and the Decalogue, as supplements or substitutes. But they serve as the basis on which others are built. Their essence, in one form or another, seems to run through all great religions. That, I believe, is not a happenstance, because if we embrace them as a guide to our conduct, our conduct will be both

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morally and economically sound.

This third postulate embodies what are judged to be the *principles* which should guide individual conduct as infallibly as the compass should guide the mariner. "Being practical" is a common popular guide to conduct; principles are scorned, if not forgotten. Those who scorn principles assert that it is foolish to concern ourselves with them; that it is hopeless to expect their complete adoption by everyone. But does this fact make a principle worthless? Are we to conclude that the moral code against murder is worthless because of its occasional violation? Or that the compass is worthless because not everyone pursues to the ultimate the direction which it indicates? Or that the Law of Gravity is made impractical or inoperative by someone walking off a cliff and meeting death because of his ignorance of this principle? No. A principle remains a principle in spite of its being ignored or violated – or even unknown. A principle, like a compass, gives one a better sense of direction, if he is wise enough to know and to follow its guidance.

Moral Postulate No. 4

Moral principles are not subject to compromise. The Golden Rule and the Decalogue, as representing moral principles, are precise and strict. They are not a code of convenience. A principle can be broken, but it cannot be bent.

If the Golden Rule and the Decalogue were to be accepted as a code of convenience, to be laid aside or modified whenever "necessity seems to justify it" (whenever, that is, one desires to act in violation of them), they would not then be serving as moral guides. A moral guide which is to be followed only when one would so conduct himself anyhow, in its absence, has no effect on his conduct, and is not a guide to him at all.

The unbending rule of a moral principle can be illustrated by some simple applications. According to one Commandment, it is wholly wrong to steal all your neighbor's cow; it is also wholly wrong to steal half your neighbor's cow, not half wrong to steal half your neighbor's cow. Robbing a bank is wrong in principle, whether the thief makes off with a million dollars or a hundred dollars or one cent. A person can rob a bank of half its money, but in the sense of moral principle there is no way to half rob a bank; you either rob it or you do not rob it.

In like manner, the Law of Gravity is precise and indivisible. One either acts in harmony with this law or he does not. There is

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no sense in saying that one has only half observed the Law of Gravity if he falls off a cliff only half as high as another cliff off which he might have fallen.

Moral laws are strict. They rule without flexibility. They know not the language of man; they are not conversant with him in the sense of compassion. They employ no man-made devices like the suspended sentence—"Guilty" or "Not guilty" is the verdict of judgment by a moral principle.

As moral guides, the Golden Rule and the Decalogue are not evil and dangerous things, like a painkilling drug, to be taken in cautious moderation, if at all. Presuming them to be the basic guides of what is right and good for civilized man, one cannot overindulge in them. Good need not be practiced in moderation.

Moral Postulate No. 5

Good ends cannot be attained by evil means. As stated in the second postulate, there is a force controlling cause and consequence which no mortal can alter, in spite of any position of influence or power which he may hold. Cause and consequence are linked inseparably.

An evil begets an evil consequence; a good, a good consequence. Good intentions cannot alter this relationship. Nor can ignorance of the consequence change its form. Nor can words. For one to say, after committing an evil act, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake," changes not one iota the consequence of the act; repentance, at best, can serve only to prevent repetition of the evil act, and perhaps assure the repenter a more preferred place in a Hereafter. But repentance *alone* does not bring back to life a murdered person, nor return the loot to the one who was robbed. Nor does it, I believe, fully obliterate the scars of evil on the doer himself.

Nor does saying, "He told me to do it," change the consequence of an evil act into a good one. For an evildoer to assert, "But it was the law of my government, the decree of my ruler," fails to dethrone God or to frustrate the rule of Natural Law.

The belief that good ends are attainable through evil means is one of the most vicious concepts of the ages. The political blueprint, *The Prince,* written around the year 1500 by Machiavelli, outlined this notorious doctrine. And for the past century it has been part and parcel of the kit of tools used by the Marxian communist-socialists to mislead people. Its use probably is as old as the conflict between temptation and conscience, because it affords a seemingly rational and pleasant detour

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around the inconveniences of one's conscience.

We know how power-hungry persons have gained political control over others by claiming that they somehow possess a special dispensation from God to do good through the exercise of means which our moral code identifies as evil. Thus arises a multiple standard of morals. It is the device by which immoral persons attempt to discredit the Golden Rule and the Decalogue, and make them inoperative.

Yet if one will stop to ponder the question just a little, he must surely see the unimpeachable logic of this postulate: Good ends cannot be attained by evil means. This is because the end pre-exists in the means, just as in the biological field we know that the seed of continued likeness pre-exists in the parent. Likewise in the moral realm, there is a similar moral reproduction wherein like begets like. This precludes the possibility of evil means leading to good ends. Good begets good; evil, evil. Immoral means cannot beget a good end, any more than snakes can beget roses.

The concept of the Welfare State can now be tested against the background of these five postulates: (1) Harmony exists between moral principles and wise economic practices. (2) There is a Universal Law of Cause and Effect, even in the areas of morals and economics. (3) A basic moral code exists in the form of the Golden Rule and the Decalogue. (4) These moral guides are of an uncompromising nature. (5) Good ends are attainable only through good means.

Moral Right to Private Property

Not all the Decalogue, as has been said, is directly relevant to the issue of the Welfare State. Its program is an economic one, and the only parts of the moral code which are directly and specifically relevant are these: (1) Thou shalt not steal. (2) Thou shalt not covet.

Steal what? Covet what? Private property, of course. What else could I steal from you, or covet of what is yours? I cannot steal from you or covet what you do not own as private property. As Dr. D. Elton Trueblood has aptly said: "Stealing is evil because ownership is good." Thus we find that the individual's right to private property is an unstated assumption which underlies the Decalogue. Otherwise these two admonitions would be empty of either purpose or meaning.

The right to have and to hold private property is not to be confused with the recovery of stolen property. If someone steals your car, it is still – by this moral right

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— your car rather than his; and for you to repossess it is merely to bring its presence back into harmony with its ownership. The same reasoning applies to the recovery of equivalent value if the stolen item itself is no longer returnable; and it applies to the recompense for damage done to one's own property by trespass or other willful destruction of private property. These means of protecting the possession of private property, and its use, are part of the mechanisms used to protect the moral right to private property.

Another point of possible confusion has to do with coveting the private property of another. There is nothing morally wrong in the admiration of something that is the property of another. Such admiration may be a stimulus to work for the means with which to buy it, or one like it. The moral consideration embodied in this Commandment has to do with thoughts and acts leading to the violation of the other Commandment, though still short of actual theft.

The moral right to private property, therefore, is consistent with the moral codes of all the great religious beliefs. It is likely that a concept of this type was in the mind of David Hume, the moral philosopher, who believed that the right to own private property is the basis for the modern concept of justice in morals.

Nor is it surprising to discover that two of history's leading exponents of the Welfare State concept found it necessary to denounce this moral code completely. Marx said: "Religion is the opium of the people." And Lenin said: "Any religious idea, any idea of a 'good God' . . . is an abominably nasty thing." Of course they would have to say these things about religious beliefs. This is because the moral code of these great religions, as we have seen, strikes at the very heart of their immoral economic scheme. Not only does their Welfare State scheme deny the moral right to private property, but it also denies other underlying bases of the moral code, as we shall see.

Moral Right to Work and to Have

Stealing and coveting are condemned in the Decalogue as violations of the basic moral code. It follows, then, that the concepts of stealing and coveting presume the right to private property, which then automatically becomes an implied part of the basic moral code. But where does private property come from?

Private property comes from what one has saved out of what he has produced, or has earned as

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a productive employee of another person. One may also, of course, obtain private property through gifts and inheritances; but in the absence of theft, precluded by this moral code, gifts come from those who have produced or earned what is given. So the right of private property, and also the right to have whatever one has produced or earned, underlies the admonitions in the Decalogue about stealing and coveting. Nobody has the moral right to take by force from the producer anything he has produced or earned, for any purpose whatsoever — even for a good purpose, as he thinks of it.

If one is free to have what he has produced and earned, it then follows that he also has the moral right to be free to choose his work. He should be free to choose his work, that is, so long as he does not violate the moral code in doing so by using in his productive efforts the property of another person through theft or trespass. Otherwise he is free to work as he will, at what he will, and to change his work when he will. Nobody has the moral right to force him to work when he does not choose to do so, or to force him to remain idle when he wishes to work, or to force him to work at a certain job when he wishes to work at some other available job. The belief of the master that his judgment is superior to that of the slave or vassal, and that control is "for his own good," is not a moral justification for the idea of the Welfare State.

We are told that some misdoings occurred in a Garden of Eden, which signify the evil in man. And I would concede that no mortal man is totally wise and good. But it is my belief that people generally, up and down the road, are intuitively and predominantly moral. By this I mean that if persons are confronted with a clear and simple decision involving basic morals, most of us will conduct ourselves morally. Most everyone, without being a learned scholar of moral philosophy, seems to have a sort of innate sense of what is right, and tends to do what is moral *unless and until he becomes confused by circumstances which obscure the moral issue that is involved.*

Immorality Is News

The content of many magazines and newspapers with widespread circulations would seem to contradict my belief that most people are moral most of the time. They headline impressive and unusual events on the seamy side of life, which might lead one to believe that these events are characteristic of everyday human affairs. It is to be noted, however, that their

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content is in sharp contrast to the local, home-town daily or weekly with its emphasis on the folksy reports of the comings and goings of friends. Why the difference? Those with large circulations find that the common denominator of news interest in their audience is events on the rare, seamy side of life; widely scattered millions are not interested in knowing that in Centerville, Sally attended Susie's birthday party last Tuesday.

It is the rarity of evil conduct that makes it impressive news for millions. Papers report the event of yesterday's murder, theft, or assault, together with the name, address, age, marital status, religious affiliation, and other descriptive features of the guilty party because these are the events of the day that are unusual enough to be newsworthy. What would be the demand for a newspaper which published all the names and identifications of all the persons who yesterday failed to murder, steal, or assault? If it were as rare for persons to act morally as it is now rare for them to act immorally, the then rare instances of moral conduct would presumably become the news of the day. So we may conclude that evil is news because it is so rare; that being moral is not news because it is so prevalent.

But does not this still prove the dominance of evil in persons? Or, since magazines and newspapers print what finds a ready readership in the market, does not that prove the evilness of those who read of evil? I believe not. It is more like the millions who attend zoos, and view with fascination the monkeys and the snakes; these spectators are not themselves monkeys or snakes, nor do they want to be; they are merely expressing an interest in the unusual, without envy. Do not most of us read of a bank robbery or a fire without wishing to be robbers or arsonists?

What else dominates the newspaper space, and gives us our dominant impressions about the quality of persons outside our circle of immediate personal acquaintance? It is mostly about the problems of political power; about those who have power or are grasping for power, diluted with a little about those who are fighting against power. Lord Acton said: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." This dictum seems to be true, as history has proved and is proving over and over again. So we can then translate it into a description of much of the news of the day: News is heavily loaded with items about persons who, as Lord Acton said, are either corrupt or are in the process of becoming more corrupt.

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If one is not careful in exposing himself to the daily news–if he fails to keep his balance and forgets how it contrasts with all those persons who comprise his family, his neighbors, his business associates, and his friends – he is likely to conclude falsely that people are predominantly immoral. This poses a serious problem for historians and historical novelists to the extent that their source of informaion is the news of a former day – especially if they do not interpret it with caution.

To Steal or Not to Steal

As a means of specifically verifying my impression about the basic, intuitive morality of persons, I would pose this test of three questions:

1. Would you steal your neighbor's cow to provide for your present needs? Would you steal it for any need reasonably within your expectation or comprehension? It should be remembered that, instead of stealing his cow, you may explore with your neighbor the possible solution to your case of need; you might arrange to do some sort of work for him, or to borrow from him for later repayment, or perhaps even plead with him for an outright gift.

2. Would you steal your neighbor's cow to provide for a known case of another neighbor's need?

3. Would you try to induce a third party to do the stealing of the cow, to be given to this needy neighbor? And do you believe that you would likely succeed in inducing him to engage in the theft?

I believe that the almost universal answer to all these questions would be: "No." Yet the facts of the case are that all of us are participating in theft every day. How? By supporting the actions of the collective agent which does the stealing as part of the Welfare State program already far advanced in the United States. By this device, Peter is robbed to "benefit" Paul, with the acquiescence if not the active support of all of us as taxpayers and citizens. We not only participate in the stealing – and share in the division of the loot – but as its victims we also meekly submit to the thievery.

Isn't it a strange thing that if you select any three fundamentally moral persons and combine them into a collective for the doing of good, they are liable at once to become three immoral persons in their collective activities? The moral principles with which they seem to be intuitively endowed are somehow lost in the confusing processes of the collective. None of the three would steal the cow from one of his fellow members as an individual, but collectively

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they all steal cows from each other. The reason is, I believe, that the Welfare State – a confusing collective device which is believed by many to be moral and righteous – has been falsely labeled. This false label has caused the belief that the Welfare State can do no wrong, that it cannot commit immoral acts, especially if those acts are approved or tolerated by more than half of the people, "democratically."

This sidetracking of moral conduct is like the belief of an earlier day: The king can do no wrong. In its place we have now substituted this belief: The *majority* can do no wrong. It is as though one were to assert that a sheep which has been killed by a pack of wolves is not really dead, provided that more than half of the wolves have participated in the killing. All these excuses for immoral conduct are, of course, nonsense. They are nonsense when tested against the basic moral code of the five postulates. Thievery is thievery, whether done by one person alone or by many in a pack – or by one who has been selected by the members of the pack as their agent.

"Thou Shalt Not Steal, Except . . . ."

It seems that wherever the Welfare State is involved, the moral precept, "Thou shalt not steal," becomes altered to say: "Thou shalt not steal, except for what thou deemest to be a worthy cause, where thou thinkest that thou canst use the loot for a better purpose than wouldst the victim of the theft."

And the precept about covetousness, under the administration of the Welfare State, seems to become: "Thou shalt not covet, except what thou wouldst have from thy neighbor who owns it."

Both of these alterations of the Decalogue result in complete abrogation of the two moral admonitions – theft and covetousness – which deal directly with economic matters. Not even the motto, "In God we trust," stamped by the government on money taken by force in violation of the Decalogue to pay for the various programs of the Welfare State, can transform this immoral act into a moral one.

Herein lies the principal moral and economic danger facing us in these critical times: Many of us, albeit with good intentions but in a hurry to do good because of the urgency of the occasion, have become victims of moral schizophrenia. While we are good and righteous persons in our individual conduct in our home community and in our basic moral code, we have become thieves and coveters in the collective activities of the

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Welfare State in which we participate and which many of us extol.

Typical of our times is what usually happens when there is a major catastrophe, destroying private property or injuring many persons. The news circulates, and generates widespread sympathy for the victims. So what is done about it? Through the mechanisms of the collective, the good intentions take the form of reaching into the other fellow's pocket for the money with which to make a gift. The Decalogue says, in effect: 'Reach into your *own* pocket – not into your neighbor's pocket – to finance your acts of compassion; good cannot be done with the loot that comes from theft." The pickpocket, in other words, is a thief even though he puts the proceeds in the collection box on Sunday, or uses it to buy bread for the poor. Being an involuntary Good Samaritan is a contradiction in terms.

When thievery is resorted to for the means with which to do good, compassion is killed. Those who would do good with the loot then lose their capacity for self-reliance, the same as a thief's self-reliance atrophies rapidly when he subsists on food that is stolen. And those who are repeatedly robbed of their property simultaneously lose their capacity for compassion. The chronic victims of robbery are under great temptation to join the gang and share in the loot. They come to feel that the voluntary way of life will no longer suffice for needs; that to subsist, they must rob and be robbed. They abhor violence, of course, but approve of robbing by "peaceful means." It is this peculiar immoral distinction which many try to draw between the Welfare State of Russia and that of Britain: The Russian brand of violence, they believe, is bad; that of Britain, good. This version of an altered Commandment would be: "Thou shalt not steal, except from nonresisting victims."

Under the Welfare State, this process of theft has spread from its use in alleviating catastrophe, to anticipating catastrophe, to conjuring up catastrophe, to the "need" for luxuries for those who have them not. The acceptance of the practice of thus violating the Decalogue has become so widespread that if the Sermon on the Mount were to appear in our day in the form of an address or publication, it would most likely be scorned as "reactionary, and not objective on the realistic problems of the day." Forgotten, it seems, by many who so much admire Christ, is the fact that he did not resort to theft in acquiring the means of his material benefac-

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tions. Nor did he advocate theft for any purpose – even for those uses most dear to his beliefs.

Progress of Moral Decay

Violation of the two economic Commandments – theft and covetousness – under the program of the Welfare State, will spread to the other Commandments; it will destroy faith in, and observance of, our entire basic moral code. We have seen this happen in many countries. It seems to have been happening here. We note how immorality, as tested by the two economic Commandments, has been spreading in high places. Moral decay has already spread to such an extent that violations of all other parts of the Decalogue, and of the Golden Rule, have become accepted as commonplace – even proper and worthy of emulation.

And what about the effectiveness of a crime investigation conducted under a Welfare State government? We may question the presumed capability of such a government – as distinct from certain investigators who are admittedly moral individuals – to judge these moral issues. We may also question the wisdom of bothering to investigate the picayune amounts of private gambling, willingly engaged in by the participants with their own money, when untold billions are being taken from the people repeatedly by the investigating agent to finance its own immoral program. This is a certain loss, not even a gamble.

Once a right to collective looting has been substituted for the right of each person to have whatever he has produced, it is not at all surprising to find the official dispensers deciding that it is right for them to loot the loot – for a "worthy" purpose, of course. Then we have the loot used by the insiders to buy votes so that they may stay in power; we have political pork barrels and lobbying for the contents; we have political patronage for political loyalty – even for loyalty to immoral conduct; we have deep freezers and mink coats given to political or personal favorites, and bribes for the opportunity to do privileged business with those who hold and dispense the loot. Why not? If it is right to loot, it is also right to loot the loot. If the latter is wrong, so also is the former.

If we are to accept Lord Acton's axiom about the corrupting effect of power – and also the reasoning of Profesor Hayek in his book, *The Road to Serfdom,* about why the worst get to the top in a Welfare State – then corruption and low moral standards in high political places should not be surprising. But when the citizens come

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more and more to laugh and joke about it, rather than to remove the crown of power and dismantle the throne, a nation is well on its way to moral rot, reminiscent of the fall of the Roman Empire and others.

Nor should we be surprised that there is some juvenile delinquency where adult delinquency is so rampant, and where the absence of any basic moral code among adults precludes even the possibility of their effectively teaching a moral code that will prevent delinquency in the young. If, as adults, we practice collective thievery through the Welfare State, and advocate it as right and good, how can we question the logic of the youths who likewise form gangs and rob the candy store? If demonstration is the best teacher, we adults must start with the practice of morality ourselves, rather than hiring some presumed specialist to study the causes of similar conduct among the youngsters; their conduct is the symptom, not the disease.

Thievery and covetousness will persist and grow, and the basic morals of ourselves, our children, and our children's children will continue to deteriorate unless we destroy the virus of immorality that is embedded in the concept of the Welfare State; unless we come to understand how the moral code of individual conduct must apply also to collective conduct, because the collective is composed solely of individuals. Moral individual conduct cannot persist in the face of collective immorality under the Welfare State program. One side or the other of the double standard of morals will have to be surrendered.

Appendix: The Welfare State Idea

The concept of the Welfare State appears in our everyday life in the form of a long list of labels and programs such as: Social Security; parity or fair prices; reasonable profits; the living wage; the TVA, MVA, CVA; Federal aid to states, to education, to bankrupt corporations; and so on.

But all these names and details of the Welfare State program tend only to obscure its essential nature. They are well-sounding labels for a laudable objective – the relief of distressing need, prevention of starvation, and the like. But how best is starvation and distress to be prevented? It is well, too, that prices, profits, and wages be fair and equitable. But what is to be the test of fairness and equity? Laudable objectives alone do not assure the success of any program; a fair appraisal of the program must include an analysis of the means of its attainment.

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The Welfare State is a name that has been substituted as a more acceptable one for communism-socialism wherever, as in the United States, these names are in general disrepute.

The Welfare State plan, viewed in full bloom of completeness, is one where the state prohibits the individual from having any right of choice in the conditions and place of his work; it takes ownership of the product of his labor; it prohibits private property. All these are done ostensibly to help those whose rights have been taken over by the Welfare State.

But these characteristics of controlled employment and confiscation of income are not those used in promotion of the idea of the Welfare State. What are usually advertised, instead, are the "benefits" of the Welfare State – the grants of food and housing and whatnot – which the state "gives" to the people. But all these "benefits" are merely the other side of the forfeited rights to choose one's own occupation and to keep whatever one is able to produce. In the same sense that the Welfare State grants benefits, the slave-master grants to his slaves certain allotments of food and other economic goods. In fact, slavery might be described as just another form of Welfare State, because of its likeness in restrictions and "benefits."

Yet the state, as such, produces nothing with which to supply these "benefits." Persons produce everything which the Welfare State takes, before it gives some back as "benefits"; but in the process, the bureaucracy takes its cut. Only by thus confiscating what persons have produced can the Welfare State "satisfy the needs of the people." So, the necessary and essential idea of the Welfare State is to control the economic actions of the vassals of the state, to take from producers what they produce, and to prevent their ever being able to attain economic independence from the state and from their fellow men through ownership of property.

To whatever extent an individual is still allowed freedom in any of these respects while living under a government like the present one in the United States, then to that extent the development of the program of the Welfare State is as yet not fully completed. Or perhaps it is an instance of a temporary grant of freedom by the Welfare State such as when a master allows his slave a day off from work to spend as he likes; but the person who is permitted some freedom by the Welfare State is still a vassal of that state just as a slave is still a slave on his day off from work.

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ARE SCHOOLS NECESSARY?

V. ORVAL WATTS

ABE LINCOLN never went to high school or college. In fact, he spent very little time in any kind of "educational institution."

But was he uneducated? On the contrary, he ranks high among the well-educated men of all centuries, including our own.

When Benjamin Franklin first went to Paris as envoy from the newly formed Confederacy of American States, crowds lined the street to see him ride to and from his lodgings. This was not because he represented an upstart little nation fighting for its independence. Instead, it was because he was already world famous as a scholar, scientist, and philosopher. Of formal schooling he had almost none; but even by today's standards, he was a highly educated man.

Does this mean that the great complex of "educational institutions" in this country represents only wasted effort and wealth?

Not altogether, of course. No doubt a Ben Franklin could profit greatly from an opportunity to use the equipment of a modern laboratory, and a teacher might save him from electrocuting himself and shorten his learning time by demonstrating the use of the equipment.

But one excuse often heard for the vast expenditures on compulsory, institutionalized schooling I should like to question. It is said that few young people have the thirst for learning or the genius of a Franklin or Lincoln, and that because of this we need schools and school teachers to make learning easier and even to *compel* the "average" individual to travel part way on the road to an education.

Too often, however, I believe that institutionalized schooling has precisely the opposite effect. Instead of starting students on the road to education, it tends to rob parents and young people of their sense of responsibility for developing the individual's powers of *self*-development.

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How Schools Cripple Students

A conversation with a young graduate from a high-prestige eastern college illustrates this point. He was enrolled in the training program of a large grocery chain and was currently working as an assistant manager of one of the branch stores. I asked him how he liked his work.

"I don't," he said.

"Then why don't you quit and try something else?" I asked.

"Well," he admitted, "I really would like to get into advertising."

"What's keeping you from it?"

His reply points to a fatal flaw in our modern craze for institutionalizing the educational process. Sadly he said, *"I never had a course in advertising."*

Sixteen years of "the best schools" in the country had given this young man a sense of dependency that would cripple him for life if he did not somehow discover the secret of Ben Franklin's scholarship or of Abe Lincoln's high level of literacy and breadth of learning: *an individual becomes truly educated only as he learns to educate himself.*

Schools and colleges cannot cram education into the heads of passive pupils as we pour water into an empty pitcher.

Too often, the young victims of mass schooling get the habit of depending on their teachers to predigest the assigned readings, correct their bad guesses on tests, and pass them on to the next grade at the end of the school year with little or no regard to the students' progress in knowledge, skills, or habits of work. This is not an educational process.

By moderately attentive listening in class, with perhaps a hasty skimming of a prepared digest of the readings, the average student in many of our "educational institutions" can get a high school certificate or even a college diploma with little or no serious mental effort.

When a college does what it should – as some do – it serves as a correctional institution rather than a diploma mill. It seeks to develop healthy attitudes toward work and responsibility rather than to cram the students' minds with facts.

The easy road to a diploma or degree does not develop the ability or habits of *study,* and, as Douglas Woodruff says, "a college degree is a poor substitute for an education."

Education requires effort on the part of the student, and the quality of his education is directly proportional to the effort he puts forth. Ability and willingness to study, to work hard at acquiring new knowledge and new skills, are essential for the life-long, self-pro-

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pelling educational process that makes human life meaningful and worthwhile.

It is easy to understand that some learning ability may be necessary to hold a job in this age of rapid technological change; and it may help to improve one's place and status in industry or social life.

Education, a Life-long Process

But why, one may ask, is continued learning necessary to give value and meaning to life apart from its occupational or social usefulness?

The answer, I think, is a simple one. The habit and skills of learning give the individual hope that his future may be better than the present, and "it is hope alone that makes us willing to live."

For man, the pursuit of happiness means the pursuit of life-promoting goals that keep advancing even as we near them.

The theory that education should always be "fun," "interesting," "enjoyable" may be useful in devising ways to keep young people in school longer, but it bars the way to an education for anyone who holds it.

The notion that sweat and strain have no necessary place in a good life, that responsibilities cause only ulcers and high blood pressure, is producing youthful dropouts from school and adult dropouts from the continuing, organized effort necessary to maintain a humane existence. It condemns its victims to the hell of boredom, self-doubt, and pursuit of life-destroying dissipations.

Enduring interests develop as we exert effort to learn, to understand, and to acquire new skills so that we may solve new problems and accomplish more difficult tasks.

Appreciation of the worth of hard work is one necessary element in true education. *Developing the habits* of strenuous effort is the other side of the coin of good living. Both come to our young people only as they find human examples of such living and as they come to understand its meaning and worth.

A school or college worthy of the name, therefore, must choose its teachers for character and wisdom, as well as for their fund of knowledge as attested by degrees or length of service.

Someone has well said, "Education is what you retain after you have forgotten everything you learned." In other words, education is not a fund of facts so much as habits, attitudes, and principles that we call character, personality, and wisdom that should develop as the years advance.

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A SLANTED PICTURE

I WAS in Chicago for the week of the 1968 Democratic Convention. What I saw on TV and in the streets and hotels were two different things. The TV coverage, coming in for climactic shots, invariably missed the provocations that led to the violence. Continuity was utterly ignored in the TV convention week "story." Moreover, one had to be there in person to experience the ghastly smells that pervaded the besieged Conrad Hilton lobby due to the spreading of some not easily eradicated chemical. If I had not realized it before, I knew then that pictures often convey less than meets a person armed not only with sight but with all the other senses. It was borne in on me that it is simply not true that a picture is worth a thousand words, for words can convey the evidence of the five senses as images on a screen cannot. If the "medium is the message," then the Age of Gutenberg provided us with a better medium – and more truthful messages. It is too bad that Gutenberg is no longer considered "with it"; he could have saved us from many of our troubles.

In *The Left-Leaning Antenna* (Arlington, $8.95) Joseph Keeley, former editor of the *American Legion Magazine,* confines himself to the subject of political bias in television. The bias obviously stems from the fact that most of the people who work in TV news rooms and in developing the vari-

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ous shows are liberal in the modern, or nonclassical, sense. The news, as he says, gets "pre-cooked" by left-leaning network staffs, so that even when it is read by an unbiased broadcaster it comes out skewed. What Spiro Agnew – and *TV Guide's* Edith Efron before Agnew – said about the subjective twist imparted to TV news coverage is absolutely true. But this does not get to the root of the matter, which is that TV is not a good medium for instruction even when it is in well-disposed hands.

TV Is Show Business

Mr. Keeley senses this when he says that TV is primarily show business. Since show business demands the spectacular, a Woodstock rock festival, with its weird costume effects and its sense of being a latter-day tribal rite, is obviously worth more to the TV cameraman than a familiar Boy Scout jamboree. Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, and Rennie Davis have become the self-annointed TV spokesmen for their generation because they accurately diagnosed the networks' natural craving for theater. The cameramen could presumably have discovered an overwhelming majority of sober citizens in the Chicago of August, 1968, but would they have lent themselves to the portrayal of a good show? Obviously not.

So it isn't just that the studios are under the control of "liberals." Mr. Keeley has an interesting chapter on TV news coverage of Vietnam, called "The War Away From Home." In part, it is the "liberal" bias of the media that has made the Vietnam War seem "immoral." Well, all wars are murderous and thus break the Commandment. But if you get right down to it this war is actually less immoral than some other wars we have fought. One does not need to apologize for our motives in trying to save any part of the world from communism, which is an immoral form of society. The Mexican War, which was a grab for territory, was less justified than our Vietnam venture. And, by comparison with Vietnam, our Indian wars were really genocidal.

Nevertheless, Vietnam has affronted the American people as no other war in our history has affronted them. The prime reason, again, is that the TV coverage of the war has been a matter of climactic shots without bothering with provocation or motivation or continuity. As Mr. Keeley points out, we see our troops burning villages while old men, women, and children stare and weep. What we don't see is General Giap or Mao Tse-tung or Lin Piao elaborating the guerrilla strategy that has compelled us to wipe out a village in

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order to remove a focal point of poison.

The bigger question is whether TV could have covered the war with an honest concern for provocation, motivation, and continuity even if the cameramen had been veritable saints of objectivity. One doubts it; the camera doesn't act that way. From now on all wars, even those that are most justified, will seem morally insupportable unless a strict censorship is invoked and the cameramen are banished from the front.

The Sight of the Camera Modifies the Subject

Another trouble with getting the truth about society from the camera is that it is hard to sneak a picture. The TV paraphernalia advertises the approach of the pictorial reporter, and this automatically transforms the scene into a stage. It brings out the ham even in shy people. Would Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin have become what they are if they had been limited to answering questions off-camera? Would they have attracted an army of followers?

Unlike the camera reporter, the old-style journalist could mingle with a crowd incognito. He could listen to people talking among themselves and expressing their natural fears and hopes. He could take part in conversations without revealing his occupation, drawing out the multi-faceted truth that can be conveyed only in words. By being a bit of a snoop, the old-fashioned reporter could, paradoxically, remain an honest man. Contrariwise, the cameraman, working in the open, is condemned to telling an essentially dishonest story.

Mr. Keeley does not do much philosophizing about the fundamental shortcomings of the camera other than to indicate that TV in war can't get behind the lines into enemy territory. He is more hopeful than I am that TV could balance its coverage of the Rubins and Hoffmans by taking "positive" pictures of sane happenings. While it is perfectly true that the TV networks could carry out their functions with more decency and sobriety than has been the custom, there is a built-in reason why they must always be defective carriers of the truth.

Take Kent State, for example. The radical planning that eventually forced the confrontation with the National Guard had been in the works for a couple of years before the final tragedy. An SDS activist, Terry Robbins, had been given much of the responsibility for radicalizing the campus. But there were hundreds of other campuses in a state of turmoil in 1969 and 1970, and how would TV

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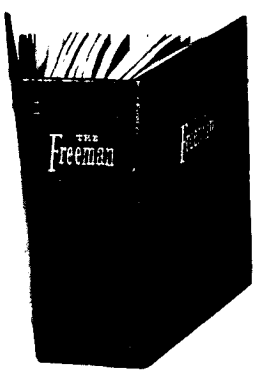
know which one was destined to boil up into something that would end in the killing of four students? The point is that the TV camera couldn't be there to catch Terry Robbins' activities in their early stages. A word man such as James Michener, however, could go in and, by sitting around and "rapping" with many people, students and townsmen, get at a many-faceted truth.

Mr. Keeley's study of bias in TV is first-rate. His proposals for keeping a tighter watch on the application of the fairness doctrine are all good. But he doesn't answer the larger question of whether it will ever be possible to get the truth out of pictures.



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